# Captain Grant's Children

Jules Verne

Table of Contents

PART TWO

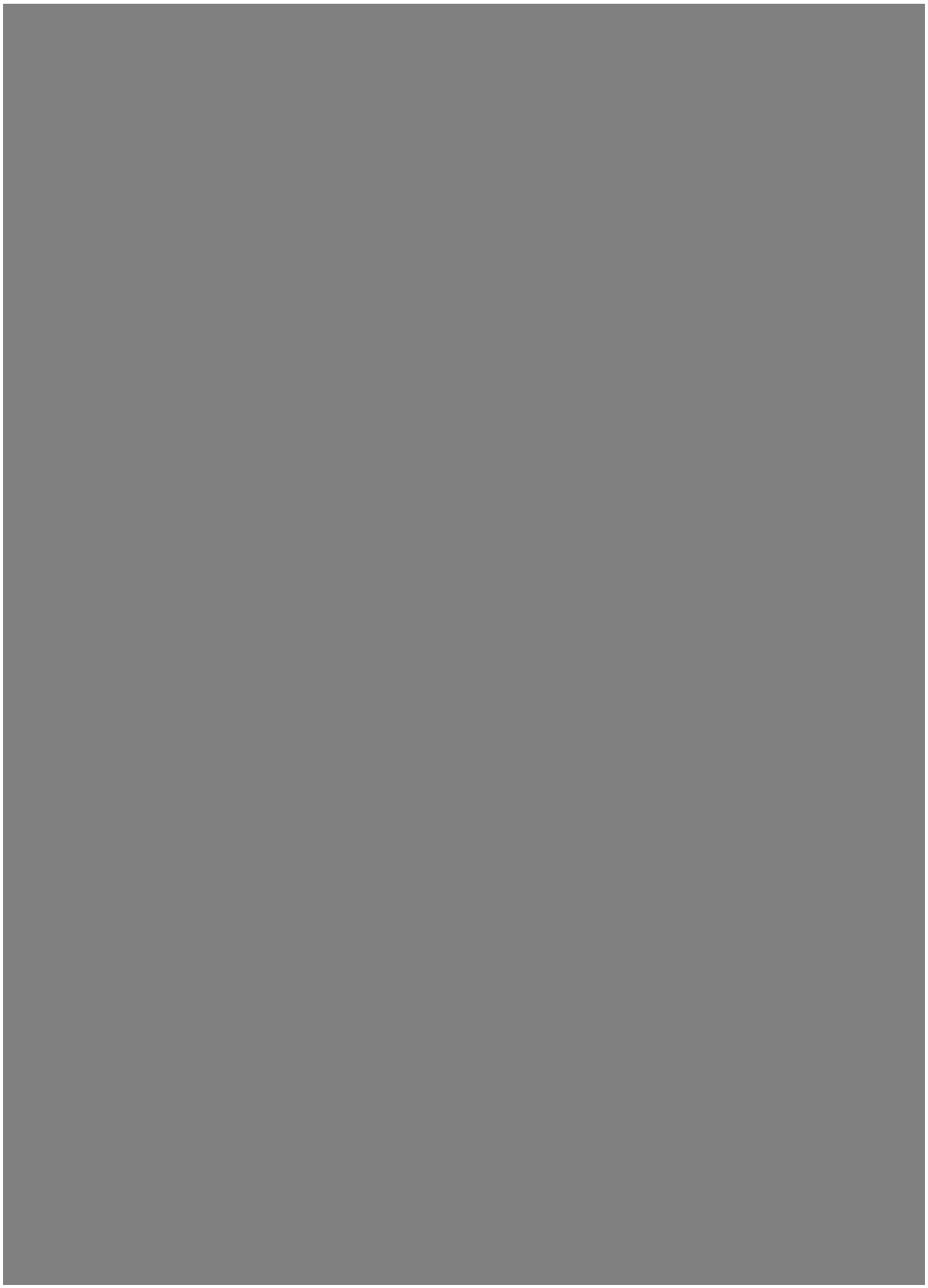
PART THREE

PART ONE

    PART TWO

    PART THREE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG™ LICENSE



# Captain Grant's Children

Jules Verne

# The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Children of Captain Grant

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org . If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title : Captain Grant's Children

Author : Jules Verne

Release date : November 26, 2004 [eBook #14163]
Most recently updated: October 28, 2024

Language : French

Other information and formats :
www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14163

Credits : Produced by Ebooks libre et gratuits at
http://www.ebooksgratuits.com

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CHILDREN OF CAPTAIN GRANT ***

Jules Verne

**CAPTAIN GRANT'S CHILDREN**

(1868)

Table of Contents

**PART ONE**

Chapter I Balance-fish

Chapter II The Three Documents

Chapter III Malcolm-Castle

Chapter IV A Proposal from Lady Glenarvan

Chapter V The Departure of the "Duncan"

Chapter VI The Passenger in Cabin Number Six

Chapter VII Where Jacques Paganel Comes From and Where He's Going

Chapter VIII One more brave man aboard the "Duncan"

Chapter IX The Strait of Magellan

Chapter X The Thirty-Seventh Parallel

Chapter XI Crossing Chile

Chapter XII At Twelve Thousand Feet in the Air

Chapter XIII Descent of the Andes

Chapter XIV The Gunshot of Providence

Chapter XV Jacques Paganel's Spanish

Chapter XVI The Rio Colorado

Chapter XVII The Pampas

Chapter XVIII In Search of a Watering Place

Chapter XIX The Red Wolves

Chapter XX The Argentine Plains

Chapter XXI The Strong Independence

Chapter XXII The Flood

Chapter XXIII Where the Life of Birds is Led

Chapter XXIV Where the life of birds continues

Chapter XXXV Between Fire and Water

Chapter XXVI The Atlantic

**PART TWO**

Chapter I The Return Aboard

Chapter II Tristan of Acuña

Chapter III Amsterdam Island

Chapter IV The bets of Jacques Paganel and Major Mac Nabbs

Chapter V The Furies of the Indian Ocean

Chapter VI Cape Bernoulli

Chapter VII Ayrton

Chapter VIII The Departure

Chapter IX The Province of Victoria

Chapter X Wimerra River

Chapter XI Burke and Stuart

Chapter XII The Melbourne to Sandhurst Railway

Chapter XIII A First Prize in Geography

Chapter XIV The Mines of Mount Alexander

Chapter XV “Australian and New Zealand gazette”

Chapter XVI Where the major maintains that they are monkeys

Chapter XVII The Millionaire Farmers

Chapter XVIII The Australian Alps

Chapter XIX A Dramatic Turn of Events

Chapter XX Aland! Zealand!

Chapter XXI Four Days of Anguish

Chapter XXII Eden

**PART THREE**

Chapter I The Macquarie

Chapter II The past of the country we are going to

Chapter III The Massacres of New Zealand

Chapter IV The Breakers

Chapter V The Improvised Sailors

Chapter VI Where cannibalism is treated theoretically

Chapter VII Where we finally reach a land that should be avoided

Chapter VIII The present of the country where one is

Chapter IX Thirty Miles North

Chapter X The National River

Chapter XI Lake Taupo

Chapter XII The Funeral of a Maori Chief

Chapter XIII The Final Hours

Chapter XIV The Forbidden Mountain

Chapter XV Paganel's Grand Means

Chapter XVI Between Two Fires

Chapter XVII Why the "Duncan" sailed along the east coast of New Zealand

Chapter XVIII Ayrton or Ben Joyce

Chapter XIX A Transaction

Chapter XX A Cry in the Night

Chapter XXI Tabor Island

Chapter XXII Jacques Paganel's Last Distraction

# PART ONE

## Chapter I *Balance-fish*

On July 26, 1864, in a brisk northeasterly breeze, a magnificent yacht steamed at full speed on the waters of the North Thames Canal. The English flag flew from her mizzenmast; at the top of the mainmast, a blue pennant bore the initials EG, embroidered in gold and surmounted by a ducal coronet. This yacht was named the *Duncan* ; she belonged to Lord Glenarvan, one of the sixteen Scottish peers who sat in the House of Lords, and the most distinguished member of the Royal Thames Yacht Club, so famous throughout the United Kingdom.

Lord Edward Glenarvan was on board with his young wife, Lady Helena, and one of his cousins, Major Mac Nabbs.

The newly built *Duncan* had come to do its trials a few miles outside the Gulf of Clyde, and was looking to return to Glasgow; already the Isle of Arran was rising on the horizon, when the lookout signaled an enormous fish frolicking in the wake of the yacht.

Captain John Mangles immediately informed Lord Edward of the encounter. The latter went up to the quarterdeck with Major Mac Nabbs and asked the captain what he thought of the animal.

"Really, Your Honor," replied John Mangles, "I think that's a fine-sized shark."

"A shark in these parts!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

“That’s beyond doubt,” the captain replied; “this fish belongs to a species of shark found in all seas and at all latitudes. It’s the balance fish, and I’m quite mistaken, or we’re dealing with one of those scoundrels! If Your Honor will allow it, and if Lady Glenarvan is pleased to witness this curious fishing expedition, we’ll soon know what we’re dealing with.”

"What do you think, Mac Nabbs?" said Lord Glenarvan to the major; "do you advise us to take the risk?"

"I think you'll like it," the major replied calmly.

"Besides," continued John Mangles, "we can never exterminate these terrible beasts too much. Let us take advantage of the opportunity, and, if it pleases your honor, it will be both a moving spectacle and a good deed."

"Go ahead, John," said Lord Glenarvan.

Then he sent word to Lady Helena, who joined him on the quarterdeck, very much tempted by this exciting fishing trip.

The sea was magnificent; one could easily follow the shark's rapid movements on its surface as it dived or lunged with surprising vigor. John Mangles gave his orders. The sailors threw a strong rope over the starboard railings, baited with a swivel and a thick piece of bacon. The shark, though still fifty yards away, sensed the bait offered to its voracious appetite. It quickly approached the yacht. Its fins, gray at the tips and black at the bases, could be seen violently beating the waves, while its tail kept it in a perfectly straight line. As it advanced, its large,

bulging eyes appeared, inflamed with lust, and its gaping jaws, when it turned, revealed a quadruple row of teeth. Its head was broad and shaped like a double hammer on the end of a handle. John Mangles could not have been mistaken; this was the most voracious specimen of the shark family, the balance fish of the English, the Jewish fish of the Provençals.

The passengers and sailors of the *Duncan* followed the shark's movements with keen attention. Soon the animal was within reach of the swivel; it turned onto its back to seize it better, and the enormous bait disappeared into its wide throat.

He immediately "hooked" himself by giving the cable a violent jerk, and the sailors hauled the monstrous shark in using a tackle attached to the end of the main yard. The shark struggled fiercely as it was torn from its natural element. But its violence was overcome.

A rope with a noose was used to seize him by the tail, immobilizing him. Moments later, he was lifted over the railings and thrown onto the deck of the yacht. Immediately, one of the sailors approached him cautiously and, with a powerful blow of his axe, severed the animal's formidable tail.

The fishing was over; there was nothing more to fear from the monster; the sailors' vengeance was satisfied, but not their curiosity. Indeed, it is customary on board every ship to carefully examine the shark's stomach.

The sailors know of his indelicate voracity, expect some surprise, and their expectation is not always disappointed.

Lady Glenarvan refused to witness this repugnant "exploration" and returned to the quarterdeck. The shark was still panting; it was ten feet long and weighed over six hundred pounds.

This size and weight are not extraordinary; but if the *balance-fish* is not classified among the giants of the species, at least it is among the most formidable.

Soon the enormous fish was gutted with an axe, and without further ceremony. The swivel had penetrated right into the stomach, which was found to be completely empty; evidently the animal had been fasting for a long time, and the disappointed sailors were about to throw the remains into the sea, when the attention of the boatswain was drawn to a crude object, firmly lodged in one of the viscera.

"Hey! What is this?" he exclaimed.

"That," replied one of the sailors, "is a piece of rock that the beast must have swallowed to weigh itself down."

"Well!" another one added, "that's definitely a cannonball that this rascal has received in his stomach, and that he hasn't been able to digest yet."

"Shut up, you others," replied Tom Austin, the yacht's second mate, "don't you see that this animal was a complete drunkard, and that to lose nothing he drank not only the wine, but also the bottle?"

"What!" cried Lord Glenarvan, "that shark has a bottle in its stomach!"

"A real bottle," replied the boatswain. "But you can clearly see it didn't come from the cellar."

"Well, Tom," Lord Edward continued, "remove it carefully; bottles found at sea often contain valuable documents."

"You think so?" said Major Mac Nabbs.

—I believe, at least, that it can happen.

"Oh! I do not contradict you," replied the major, "and there may be a secret there."

"That's what we're going to find out," said Glenarvan.

—Well, Tom?

"There," replied the second, pointing to a shapeless object that he had just removed, not without difficulty, from the shark's stomach.

"Well," said Glenarvan, "have this ugly thing washed, and take it to the quarterdeck."

Tom obeyed, and this bottle, found in such singular circumstances, was placed on the square table, around which Lord Glenarvan, Major Mac Nabbs, Captain John Mangles and Lady Helena took their places, for a woman is, it is said, always a little curious.

Everything is an event at sea. There was a moment of silence. Everyone gazed questioningly at the fragile wreck. Was it the secret of an entire disaster, or merely an insignificant message entrusted to the waves by some idle sailor?

However, it was necessary to know what to expect, and Glenarvan proceeded without further delay to examine the bottle; he took, moreover, all the necessary precautions in such circumstances; he was

like a coroner noting the particulars of a serious case; and Glenarvan was right, for the most insignificant clue in appearance can often lead to an important discovery.

Before being examined internally, the bottle was inspected externally. It had a tapered neck, the sturdy neck of which still bore a piece of wire corroded by rust; its very thick walls, capable of withstanding pressure of several atmospheres, betrayed an obvious Champagne origin. With bottles like these, the winemakers of Aï or Épernay break chair legs without them showing a trace of a crack. This one, therefore, had been able to withstand the rigors of a long journey with impunity.

"A bottle from the Clicquot house," the major said simply.

And, as he must have known what he was talking about, his statement was accepted without question.

"My dear major," replied Helena, "it doesn't matter what this bottle is, if we don't know where it came from."

"We shall know, my dear Helena," said Lord Edward, "and already we can say that it comes from afar. Look at the petrified matter that covers it, these mineralized substances, so to speak, under the action of the sea waters! This wreck had already spent a long time in the ocean before being swallowed by a shark."

"It is impossible for me not to agree with you," replied the major, "and this fragile vase, protected by its stone casing, could have made a long journey."

"But where does he come from?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

“Wait, my dear Helena, wait; one must be patient with bottles. Either I am very much mistaken, or this one will answer all our questions itself.”

And, saying this, Glenarvan began to scrape away the hard materials that protected the neck; soon the stopper appeared, but badly damaged by seawater.

"An unfortunate circumstance," said Glenarvan, "because if there is any paper there, it will be in very bad condition."

"That's to be feared," replied the major.

"I will add," continued Glenarvan, "that this poorly sealed bottle could not have been long before it sank, and it is fortunate that this shark swallowed it to bring it to us on board the *Duncan* ."

“No doubt,” replied John Mangles, “and yet it would have been better to catch it in the open sea, at a well-defined longitude and latitude. Then, by studying atmospheric and marine currents, one can trace the path taken; but with a factor like that, with these sharks that swim against wind and tide, one no longer knows what to expect.”

"We'll see," replied Glenarvan.

At that moment, he was removing the stopper with the greatest care, and a strong salty smell spread through the poop deck.

"Well?" asked Lady Helena, with a very feminine impatience.

"Yes!" said Glenarvan, "I wasn't mistaken! There are papers here!"

—Documents! Documents! cried Lady Helena.

"Only," replied Glenarvan, "they appear to be eaten away by the moisture, and it is impossible to remove them, because they adhere to the sides of the bottle."

"Let's break it," said Mac Nabbs.

"I would prefer to keep it intact," replied Glenarvan.

"Me too," replied the major.

"Without a doubt," said Lady Helena, "but the contents are more precious than the container, and it is better to sacrifice the latter for the former."

"If your honor only detaches the neck," said John Mangles, "it will allow the document to be removed without damaging it."

"Come now! Come now! My dear Edward," cried Lady Glenarvan.

It was difficult to proceed in any other way, and despite his reluctance, Lord Glenarvan resolved to break the neck of the precious bottle. He had to use a hammer, for the stony outer layer had acquired the hardness of granite. Soon its fragments fell onto the table, and several pieces of paper could be seen clinging to one another.

Glenarvan carefully removed them, separated them, and spread them out before his eyes, while Lady Helena, the major, and the captain crowded around him.

## Chapter II *The Three Documents*

These scraps of paper, half-destroyed by the seawater, revealed only a few words, indecipherable remnants of lines almost entirely erased. For several minutes, Lord Glenarvan examined them carefully; he turned them over and over; he held them up to the daylight; he observed the slightest traces of writing left untouched by the sea; then he looked at his friends, who regarded him with anxious eyes.

"There are three separate documents here," he said, "and probably three copies of the same document translated into three languages, one English, one French, and the third German. The few words that have survived leave me with no doubt about this."

"But at least, do these words make sense?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

—It is difficult to say, my dear Helena; the words written on these documents are very incomplete.

"Perhaps they complement each other?" said the major.

"That must be it," replied John Mangles; "it is impossible that seawater eroded these lines in precisely the same places, and by piecing these fragments of sentences together, we shall eventually find an intelligible meaning in them."

"That's what we'll do," said Lord Glenarvan, "but let's proceed methodically. Here is the English document first."

This document presented the following layout of lines and words:

*62 bri gow sink…* Etc.

"That doesn't mean much," said the major, looking disappointed.

"In any case," replied the captain, "that's good English."

—There is no doubt about that, said Lord Glenarvan; the words *sink, aland, that, and, lost* , are intact; *skipp* obviously forms the word *skipper* , and there is talk of a Mr. Gr, probably the captain of a shipwrecked vessel.

—Let us add, said John Mangles, the words *monit* and *ssistance* , the interpretation of which is obvious.

"Well, that's something," replied Lady Helena.

"Unfortunately," replied the major, "we are missing entire sections of the information. How are we going to find the name of the lost ship, the location of the shipwreck?"

"We will find them," said Lord Edward.

"That is not in doubt," replied the major, who invariably agreed with everyone else, "but in what way?"

—By supplementing one document with the other.

"Let's look then!" cried Lady Helena.

The second piece of paper, more damaged than the first, offered only isolated words arranged in this way: *7 juni glas...* Etc.

"This is written in German," said John Mangles, as soon as he had laid eyes on the paper.

"And you know this language, John?" asked Glenarvan.

—Perfectly, Your Honor.

"Well, tell us what these few words mean."

The captain examined the document carefully and spoke as follows:

"First, we now know the date of the event; *7 juni* means *June 7* , and by comparing this number with the numbers 62 provided by the English document, we have this complete date: *June 7, 1862* .

"Very good!" cried Lady Helena; "continue, John."

"On the same line," continued the young captain, "I find the word *'glas* ', which, when compared with the word *'gow'* provided by the first document, gives *Glasgow* . It is obviously a ship from the port of Glasgow."

"That's my opinion," replied the major.

"The second line of the document is entirely missing," John Mangles continued. "But, on the third, I find two important words: *'zwei'* which means *two* , and *'atrosen* ', or better *'matrosen* ', which means *sailors* in German."

"So," said Lady Helena, "it would be a captain and two sailors?"

"That's likely," replied Lord Glenarvan.

“I confess to your honor,” the captain continued, “that the following word, *graus* , puzzles me. I don’t know how to translate it. Perhaps the third document will clarify it for us. As for the last two words, they are easily explained. *Bringt ihnen* means *carry them* , and if we compare them to the English word found, like them, on the seventh line of the first document—that is, the word *assistance* —the phrase *carry them to their aid* becomes quite clear.”

"Yes! Help them!" said Glenarvan, "but where are these unfortunate people? So far we have not a single indication of their location, and the scene of the disaster is completely unknown."

"Let's hope the French document will be more explicit," said Lady Helena.

“Let’s look at the French document,” replied Glenarvan, “and since we all know the language, our research will be easier.”

Here is the exact facsimile of the third document:

*Troi ats tannia gonie…* Etc.

“There are figures!” cried Lady Helena. “Look, gentlemen, look!”

“Let us proceed in an orderly fashion,” said Lord Glenarvan, “and begin at the beginning. Allow me to address these scattered and incomplete words one by one. I see first, from the very first letters, that it is a three-masted ship, whose name, thanks to English and French documents, has been entirely preserved for us: the *Britannia* . Of the next two words, *gonie* and *austral* , only the latter has a meaning that you all understand.”

"That's already a valuable detail," replied John Mangles; "the shipwreck took place in the southern hemisphere."

"That's vague," said the major.

“I’ll continue,” Glenarvan resumed. “Ah! The word *abor* , the root of the verb *aborder* . These unfortunate people have landed somewhere. But where? *Contin* ! Is it on a continent? *Cruel* !…”

— *Cruel!* cried John Mangles, but that's the explanation for the German word *graus… Grausam… Cruel!*

"Let's continue! Let's continue!" said Glenarvan, whose interest was violently aroused as the meaning of these incomplete words became clear to him. *"Indi* … Is this *India , where these sailors were supposedly cast ashore? What does this word 'ongit'* mean ? Ah! *Longitude* ! And here is the latitude: *thirty-seven degrees eleven minutes* ."

—Finally! We now have a precise indication.

"But the longitude is missing," said Mac Nabbs.

“One cannot have everything, my dear Major,” replied Glenarvan, “and it is something that is more than a precise degree of latitude. Decidedly, this French document is the most complete of the three. It is evident that each of them was a literal translation of the others, for they all contain the same number of lines. We must therefore now gather them together, translate them into a single language, and seek their most probable, logical, and explicit meaning.”

"Is it in French," asked the major, "in English or in German that you will make this translation?"

—In French, replied Glenarvan, since most of the interesting words have been preserved for us in that language.

"Your honor is right," said John Mangles, "and besides, this language is familiar to us."

"Agreed. I will write this document by piecing together these fragments of words and sentences, respecting the intervals between

them, and completing those whose meaning cannot be doubted; then, we will compare and judge."

Glenarvan immediately took up his pen, and, a few moments later, he presented to his friends a paper on which were drawn the following lines: *June 7, 1862 three-masted ship Britannia Glasgow sunk…* Etc.

At that moment, a sailor came to inform the captain that the *Duncan* was entering the Gulf of Clyde, and he asked for his orders.

"What are your honour's intentions?" said John Mangles, addressing Lord Glenarvan.

"Get to Dumbarton as quickly as possible, John; then, while Lady Helena returns to Malcolm Castle, I will go to London to submit this document to the Admiralty."

John Mangles gave his orders accordingly, and the sailor went to transmit them to the second mate.

"Now, my friends," said Glenarvan, "let us continue our search. We are on the trail of a great catastrophe. The lives of some men depend on our sagacity. Let us therefore employ all our intelligence to guess the answer to this riddle."

"We are ready, my dear Edward," replied Lady Helena.

“First of all,” Glenarvan continued, “we must consider three very distinct things in this document: 1) the things we know; 2) those we can conjecture; 3) those we do not know. What do we know? We know that on June 7, 1862, a three-masted ship, the *Britannia* , from Glasgow,

sank; that two sailors and the captain threw this document into the sea at 37° 11' latitude, and that they are requesting assistance.”

"Perfectly," replied the major.

"What can we conjecture?" Glenarvan continued. "First, that the shipwreck took place in the southern seas, and I will immediately draw your attention to the word *'gony* .' Doesn't it itself indicate the name of the country to which it belongs?"

"Patagonia!" exclaimed Lady Helena.

—Probably.

"But is Patagonia crossed by the thirty-seventh parallel?" asked the major.

“That’s easy to verify,” replied John Mangles, unfolding a map of South America. “That’s right. Patagonia is touched by this thirty-seventh parallel. It cuts through Araucanía, runs along the northern edge of Patagonia across the pampas, and disappears into the Atlantic.”

“Good. Let’s continue our conjectures. The two sailors and the captain *… landed* on what? The continent; you understand, a continent and not an island. What becomes of them? You have here two providential letters *…* which tell you their fate. These unfortunate men, in fact, are *captured* or *prisoners* of whom? *Cruel Indians* . Are you convinced? Don’t the words leap into the blanks of their own accord? Doesn’t this document become clear to you? Doesn’t the light dawn in your mind?”

Glenarvan spoke with conviction. His eyes radiated absolute confidence. All his passion was contagious, spreading to his listeners.

Like him, they exclaimed, "It's obvious! It's obvious!"

Lord Edward, after a moment, continued in these terms:

"All these hypotheses, my friends, seem extremely plausible to me; for me, the catastrophe took place on the coasts of Patagonia. Moreover, I will ask in Glasgow what the destination of the *Britannia was* , and we will know if it could have been carried into those waters."

"Oh! We needn't look so far," replied John Mangles. "I have here the collection of the *mercantile and shipping gazette* , which will give us precise information."

"Let's see, let's see!" said Lady Glenarvan.

John Mangles picked up a stack of newspapers from 1862 and began to leaf through them quickly. His search was not long, and soon he said with a note of satisfaction:

"May 30, 1862. Peru! The Callao! In charge for Glasgow. Britannia, Captain Grant."

"Grant!" cried Lord Glenarvan, "that bold Scotsman who wanted to found a Nova Scotia in the Pacific seas!"

"Yes," replied John Mangles, "the very same man who, in 1861, embarked at Glasgow on the *Britannia* , and of whom we have never heard again."

“No more doubt! No more doubt!” said Glenarvan. “It’s definitely him. The *Britannia* left Callao on May 30th, and on June 7th, eight days after its departure, it was lost off the coast of Patagonia. There is its whole story in these fragments of words that seemed indecipherable. You see,

my friends, how much we could conjecture. As for what we don’t know, it boils down to a single degree of longitude that we lack.”

"It is useless to us," replied John Mangles, "since the country is known, and with the latitude alone, I would take it upon myself to go straight to the scene of the shipwreck."

"So we know everything, then?" said Lady Glenarvan.

"Everything, my dear Helena, and those gaps that the sea has left between the words of the document, I will fill them in without difficulty, as if I were writing at Captain Grant's dictation."

Lord Glenarvan immediately took up his pen again, and without hesitation wrote the following note:

*On June 7, 1862, the three-masted ship Britannia, of Glasgow, sank off the coast of Patagonia in the southern hemisphere. Heading ashore, two sailors and Captain Grant attempted to reach the mainland, where they were taken prisoner by cruel Indians. They threw this document at 37° 11' longitude. Help them, or they are lost* .

"Good! Good! My dear Edward," said Lady Helena, "and if these unfortunate people see their homeland again, it is to you that they will owe this happiness."

“And they will see her again,” Glenarvan replied. “This document is too explicit, too clear, too certain, for England to hesitate to come to the aid of three of her children abandoned on a deserted shore. What she did for Franklin and so many others, she will do today for the survivors of the *Britannia* !”

“But these unfortunate men,” Lady Helena continued, “surely have families mourning their loss. Perhaps poor Captain Grant has a wife, children…”

“You are right, my dear lady, and I will see to it that I inform them that all hope is not yet lost. Now, my friends, let us return to the quarterdeck, for we must approach the port.”

Indeed, the *Duncan* had steamed hard; it was at that moment sailing along the shores of the Isle of Bute, and leaving Rothesay on starboard, with its charming little town, lying in its fertile valley; then it rushed into the narrow channels of the Gulf, maneuvered in front of Greenok, and, at six o'clock in the evening, it anchored at the foot of the basalt rock of Dumbarton, crowned by the famous castle of Wallace, the Scottish hero.

There, a horse-drawn carriage was waiting for Lady Helena to take her back to Malcolm Castle with Major Mac Nabbs. Then Lord Glenarvan, after kissing his young wife, boarded the Glasgow railway express.

But, before leaving, he had entrusted an important note to a faster agent, and the electric telegraph, a few minutes later, brought to the *Times* and the *Morning-Chronicle* a notice written in these terms:

"For information on the fate of the three-masted ship ' *Britannia* ,' of Glasgow, Captain Grant, contact Lord Glenarvan, Malcolm-Castle, 'Luss, County Dumbarton, Scotland.'"

## Chapter III *Malcolm-Castle*

Malcolm Castle, one of the most picturesque in the Highlands, is located near the village of Luss, overlooking its charming valley. The clear waters of Loch Lomond lap against the granite of its walls.

From time immemorial it belonged to the Glenarvan family, who preserved in the land of Rob Roy and Fergus MacGregor the hospitable customs of Walter Scott's old heroes. At the time of the social revolution in Scotland, many vassals were driven out, unable to pay the heavy rents to the former clan chiefs.

Some died of hunger; others became fishermen; still others emigrated. It was a general despair. Alone among all, the Glenarvans believed that loyalty bound the great and the small, and they remained faithful to their tenants. Not one left the roof that had seen him born; none abandoned the land where his ancestors lay; all remained with the clan of their former lords. Thus, even at that time, in that century of disaffection and disunity, the Glenarvan family consisted only of Scotsmen at Malcolm Castle as well as aboard the *Duncan* ; all descended from the vassals of MacGregor, MacFarlane, MacNabbs, and MacNaughtons—that is to say, they were children of the counties of Stirling and Dumbarton: good people, devoted body and soul to their master, and some of whom still spoke the Gaelic of old Caledonia.

Lord Glenarvan possessed an immense fortune; he used it to do much good; his kindness even surpassed his generosity, for the former was boundless, while the latter necessarily had limits. The Lord of Luss, Malcolm's "laird," represented his county in the House of Lords. But, with his Jacobite leanings and little concern for pleasing the House of Hanover, he was rather unpopular with English statesmen, especially

because he adhered to the traditions of his ancestors and vigorously resisted the political encroachments of "those from the south."

Lord Edward Glenarvan was not a backward man, nor of small mind, nor of poor intelligence; but, while keeping the gates of his county wide open to progress, he remained Scottish at heart, and it was for the glory of Scotland that he would compete with his racing yachts in the "matches" of the Royal Thames Yacht Club.

Edward Glenarvan was thirty-two years old; he was tall, his features somewhat stern, his gaze infinitely gentle, his person entirely imbued with Highland poetry. He was known to be excessively brave, enterprising, chivalrous, a 19th-century Fergus, but good above all else, better than Saint Martin himself, for he would have given his entire cloak to the poor people of the highlands.

Lord Glenarvan had been married for barely three months; he had married Miss Helena Tuffnel, the daughter of the great traveler William Tuffnel, one of the many victims of geographical science and the passion for discovery.

Miss Helena did not belong to a noble family, but she was Scottish, which was worth more than any nobility in Lord Glenarvan's eyes; this charming, courageous, and devoted young woman became the Lord of Luss's life partner. One day, he found her living alone, an orphan, and practically penniless, in her father's house in Kilpatrick.

He realized the poor girl would make a valiant wife; he married her. Miss Helena was twenty-two; she was a fair-haired young woman with eyes as blue as the water of Scottish lakes on a fine spring morning. Her love for her husband still outweighed her gratitude. She loved him as if

she were the wealthy heiress, and he the abandoned orphan. As for her farmers and servants, they were ready to give their lives for the one they called: our good lady of Luss.

Lord Glenarvan and Lady Helena lived happily at Malcolm Castle, amidst the magnificent and wild Highlands, strolling beneath the dark avenues of chestnut and sycamore trees, by the lake where the *pibrochs* of old still echoed, and in the depths of those uncultivated gorges where the history of Scotland is written in centuries-old ruins. One day they would wander through birch or larch woods, amidst vast fields of yellowing heather; another day they would climb the steep peaks of Ben Lomond, or ride their horses through deserted *glens* , studying, understanding, and admiring this poetic land still called "the land of Rob Roy," and all those famous sites so valiantly celebrated by Walter Scott. In the evening, at nightfall, when "MacFarlane's lantern" lit up on the horizon, they would wander along the bartazennes, an old circular gallery that formed a crenellated necklace around Malcolm's castle, and there, pensive, forgotten and as if alone in the world, sitting on some detached stone, in the midst of the silence of nature, under the pale rays of the moon, while night gradually fell on the summit of the darkened mountains, they remained buried in that limpid ecstasy and intimate rapture of which loving hearts alone have the secret on earth.

Thus passed the first months of their marriage. But Lord Glenarvan did not forget that his wife was the daughter of a great traveler! He reasoned that Lady Helena must share in her father's aspirations, and he was not mistaken. The *Duncan* was built; it was destined to carry Lord and Lady Glenarvan to the most beautiful countries in the world, across the waters of the Mediterranean, and to the islands of the

archipelago. Imagine Lady Helena's joy when her husband placed the *Duncan* at her command! Indeed, is there greater happiness than to sail with one's love to those charming lands of Greece, and to see the honeymoon dawn on the enchanted shores of the Orient?

However, Lord Glenarvan had left for London.

It was a matter of saving unfortunate shipwrecked people; therefore, Lady Helena was more impatient than sad about this momentary absence; the next day, a dispatch from her husband gave her hope of a prompt return; in the evening, a letter requested an extension; Lord Glenarvan's proposals encountered some difficulties; the day after that, another letter, in which Lord Glenarvan did not hide his displeasure with the Admiralty.

That day, Lady Helena began to feel worried.

That evening, she was alone in her room when the steward of the castle, Mr. Halbert, came to ask her if she would receive a young girl and a young boy who wished to speak to Lord Glenarvan.

"Local people?" said Lady Helena.

"No, madam," replied the steward, "for I do not know them.
They have just arrived by train from Balloch, and from
Balloch to Luss, they traveled on foot."

"Please ask them to come up, Halbert," said Lady Glenarvan.

The steward left. A few moments later, the girl and boy were brought into Lady Helena's room. They were sister and brother. Their resemblance left no room for doubt.

The sister was sixteen years old. Her pretty, slightly tired face, her eyes that must have often wept, her resigned but courageous countenance, her simple but neat attire, all spoke in her favor. She held by the hand a determined-looking twelve-year-old boy who seemed to be taking his sister under his wing. Indeed! Anyone who had wronged the young girl would have had to deal with this little fellow! The sister remained somewhat taken aback upon finding herself before Lady Helena. The latter hastened to speak.

"Do you want to talk to me?" she said, encouraging the young girl with her eyes.

"No," replied the young boy in a determined tone, "not to you, but to Lord Glenarvan himself."

"Excuse him, madam," said the sister, looking at her brother.

"Lord Glenarvan is not at the castle," Lady Helena continued; "but I am his wife, and if I can stand in for him with you…"

"Are you Lady Glenarvan?" said the young girl.

—Yes, miss.

—Lord Glenarvan of Malcolm-Castle's wife, who published a note in the *Times relating to the sinking of the Britannia* ?

"Yes! Yes!" replied Lady Helena eagerly, "and you?"

—I am Miss Grant, madam, and this is my brother.

—Miss Grant! Miss Grant! cried Lady Helena, drawing the young girl close to her, taking her hands, and kissing the little boy's chubby

cheeks.

"Madam," the young girl continued, "what do you know about my father's shipwreck? Is he alive? Will we ever see him again? Please speak!"

"My dear child," said Lady Helena, "God forbid that I should answer you lightly in such a circumstance; I would not want to give you false hope..."

—Speak, madam, speak! I am strong against pain, and I can hear everything.

"My dear child," replied Lady Helena, "hope is very faint; but, with the help of God who can do all things, it is possible that you may one day see your father again."

"My God! My God!" cried Miss Grant, who could not contain her tears, while Robert covered Lady Glenarvan's hands with kisses.

When the first attack of this painful joy had passed, the young girl gave herself over to asking countless questions; Lady Helena told her the story of the document, how the *Britannia* had been lost on the coasts of Patagonia; how, after the shipwreck, the captain and two sailors, the only survivors, must have reached the continent; finally, how they implored the help of the whole world in this document written in three languages and abandoned to the whims of the ocean.

During this story, Robert Grant devoured Lady Helena with his eyes; his life hung on her every word; his childlike imagination conjured up the terrible scenes of which his father must have been the victim; he saw him on the deck of the *Britannia* ; he followed him through the

waves; he clung with him to the coastal rocks; he dragged himself, panting, across the sand and out of reach of the surf. Several times during this story, words escaped his lips.

"Oh! Dad! My poor dad!" he cried, pressing himself against his sister.

As for Miss Grant, she listened, clasping her hands, and did not utter a single word until, the story finished, she said:

"Oh! Madam! The document! The document!"

"I no longer have it, my dear child," replied Lady Helena.

—You don't have it anymore?

—No; in your father's own interest, it had to be taken to London by Lord Glenarvan; but I told you everything it contained word for word, and how we managed to recover its exact meaning; among these almost erased fragments of sentences, the waves have preserved a few numbers; unfortunately, the longitude…

"We'll do without it!" cried the young boy.

“Yes, Mr. Robert,” Helena replied, smiling at his determination. “So, as you can see, Miss Grant, you know every detail of this document as well as I do.”

"Yes, madam," replied the young girl, "but I would have liked to see my father's handwriting."

—Well, tomorrow, perhaps tomorrow, Lord Glenarvan will be back. My husband, armed with this irrefutable document, wanted to submit it

to the Admiralty commissioners, in order to provoke the immediate dispatch of a ship in search of Captain Grant.

"Is it possible, madam!" cried the young girl; "you did this for us?"

—Yes, my dear miss, and I am expecting Lord Glenarvan any moment now.

—Madam, said the young girl with a deep accent of gratitude and a religious fervor, Lord Glenarvan and you, be blessed by heaven!

“My dear child,” replied Lady Helena, “we deserve no thanks; anyone else in our place would have done what we did. May the hopes I have allowed you to imagine be fulfilled! Until Lord Glenarvan returns, you shall remain at the castle…”

"Madam," replied the young girl, "I would not want to take advantage of the sympathy you show to strangers."

"Strangers! Dear child; neither you nor your brother are strangers in this house, and I want Lord Glenarvan, upon his arrival, to inform Captain Grant's children of what will be attempted to save their father."

An offer made with such heartfelt sincerity could not be refused. It was therefore agreed that Miss Grant and her brother would await Lord Glenarvan's return at Malcolm Castle.

## Chapter IV *A Proposal from Lady Glenarvan*

During this conversation, Lady Helena had not mentioned the fears expressed in Lord Glenarvan's letters concerning the reception his request had received from the Admiralty commissioners. Nor was a

word said about Captain Grant's probable captivity among the Native Americans of South America. What good would it do to sadden these poor children about their father's situation and diminish the hope they had just conceived? It changed nothing. Lady Helena had therefore remained silent on this matter, and, having answered all of Miss Grant's questions, she inquired in turn about her life, about her position in this world where she seemed to be her brother's sole protector.

It was a touching and simple story that further increased Lady Glenarvan's sympathy for the young girl.

Miss Mary and Robert Grant were the captain's only children. Harry Grant had lost his wife at Robert's birth, and during his long voyages, he left his children in the care of a kind, elderly cousin. Captain Grant was a hardy seaman, a man well-versed in his trade, a skilled navigator and a shrewd businessman, thus possessing a valuable dual skill set for skippers in the merchant navy. He lived in the city of Dundee, in County Perth, Scotland. Captain Grant was, therefore, a local.

His father, a minister at St. Katrine Church, had given him a complete education, believing that it could never harm anyone, not even a sea captain.

During his early overseas voyages, first as second mate and finally as skipper, his business ventures were successful, and a few years after the birth of Robert Harry, he found himself in possession of a certain fortune.

It was then that a great idea came to him, one that made his name popular in Scotland. Like the Glenarvans, and some other prominent Lowland families, he was separated in spirit, if not in fact, from

encroaching England. In his eyes, the interests of his country could not be those of the Anglo-Saxons, and to give them their own development, he resolved to found a vast Scottish colony on one of the continents of Oceania.

Did he dream of the future of that independence which the United States had exemplified, that independence which India and Australia are bound to achieve one day? Perhaps.

Perhaps he also let his secret hopes show. It's understandable, then, that the government refused to support his colonization project; it even created difficulties for Captain Grant that, in any other country, would have been fatal. But Harry didn't let himself be discouraged; he appealed to the patriotism of his compatriots, put his fortune at the service of his cause, built a ship, and, assisted by an elite crew, after entrusting his children to the care of his elderly cousin, he set sail to explore the great islands of the Pacific. That was in 1861.

For a year, until May 1862, there was news of him; but, since his departure from Callao in June, no one heard anything more about the *Britannia* , and the *maritime gazette* became silent on the fate of the captain.

It was in these circumstances that Harry Grant's old cousin died, and the two children were left alone in the world.

Mary Grant was fourteen years old at the time; her valiant spirit did not shrink from the situation she faced, and she devoted herself entirely to her still-child brother. He needed to be raised and educated.

Through sheer thrift, prudence, and shrewdness, working night and day, devoting herself entirely to him, denying herself entirely, the sister was sufficient for her brother's upbringing and courageously fulfilling her maternal duties. The two children thus lived in Dundee in this touching situation of nobly accepted poverty, but valiantly fought against it.

Mary thought only of her brother and dreamed of a happy future for him. For her, alas! The *Britannia* was lost forever, and her father was dead, truly dead. It is therefore impossible to describe her emotion when the note in The *Times* , which chance threw before her eyes, suddenly pulled her from her despair.

There was no room for hesitation; her decision was made immediately. Even if she were to learn that Captain Grant's body had been found on a deserted coast, at the bottom of a wrecked ship, that was better than this incessant doubt, this eternal torture of the unknown.

She told everything to her brother; that same day, the two children took the railway to Perth, and in the evening they arrived at Malcolm-Castle, where Mary, after so much anguish, began to hope again.

This was the painful story that Mary Grant told Lady Glenarvan, simply and without thinking that in all this, during these long years of hardship, she had behaved like a heroic girl; but Lady Helena thought of it for her, and several times, without hiding her tears, she hugged Captain Grant's two children.

As for Robert, it seemed as if he were hearing this story for the first time; his eyes widened as he listened to his sister; he understood

everything she had done, everything she had suffered, and finally, he embraced her:

"Ah! Mother! My dear mother!" he cried, unable to hold back this cry that came from the depths of his heart.

During this conversation, night had completely fallen. Lady Helena, mindful of the children's fatigue, decided not to prolong the discussion any longer. Mary Grant and Robert were shown to their rooms and fell asleep dreaming of a brighter future. After they left, Lady Helena summoned the major and informed him of all the events of the evening.

"What a fine young girl this Mary Grant is!" said Mac Nabbs, when he had heard his cousin's story.

"God forbid that my husband succeeds in his undertaking!" replied Lady Helena, "for the situation of these two children would become dreadful."

"He will succeed," replied Mac Nabbs, "or the lords of the admiralty will have hearts harder than Portland stone."

Despite the major's reassurance, Lady Helena spent the night in the most intense fears and could not get a moment's rest.

The next day, Mary Grant and her brother, up at dawn, were walking in the large courtyard of the castle, when the sound of a carriage was heard.

Lord Glenarvan was returning to Malcolm Castle at full gallop. Almost immediately, Lady Helena, accompanied by the major, appeared in the

courtyard and rushed to meet her husband. He seemed sad, disappointed, and furious.

He held his wife in his arms and remained silent.

"Well, Edward, Edward?" cried Lady Helena.

"Well, my dear Helena," replied Lord Glenarvan, "those people have no heart!"

—They refused?…

“Yes! They refused me a ship! They spoke of the millions wasted searching for Franklin! They declared the document obscure, unintelligible! They said that the abandonment of these unfortunate men dated back two years already, and that there was little chance of finding them! They maintained that, prisoners of the Indians, they must have been driven inland, that one couldn't search all of Patagonia to find three men—three Scotsmen!—that such a search would be futile and perilous, that it would cost more lives than it would save. In short, they gave all the wrong reasons people give for wanting to refuse. They remembered the captain's plans, and poor Grant is lost forever!”

"My father! My poor father!" cried Mary Grant, rushing to Lord Glenarvan's knees.

—Your father! What, miss… said he, surprised to see this young girl at his feet.

"Yes, Edward, Miss Mary and her brother," replied Lady Helena, "Captain Grant's two children, whom the Admiralty has just condemned to remain orphans!"

"Ah! Miss," Lord Glenarvan resumed, helping the young girl to her feet, "if I had known of your presence…"

He said no more! A painful silence, punctuated by sobs, reigned in the courtyard.

No one raised their voice, neither Lord Glenarvan, nor Lady Helena, nor the major, nor the castle servants, who stood silently around their masters. But by their very demeanor, all these Scotsmen were protesting against the conduct of the English government.

After a few moments, the major spoke, and, addressing Lord Glenarvan, he said:

"So, you have no hope left?"

-None.

"Well," cried young Robert, "I'll go and find those people, and we'll see..."

Robert did not complete his threat, for his sister stopped him; but his clenched fist indicated less than peaceful intentions.

"No, Robert," said Mary Grant, "no! Let us thank these brave lords for what they have done for us; let us be eternally grateful to them, and let us both go."

"Mary!" cried Lady Helena.

—Miss, where do you want to go? said Lord Glenarvan.

“I will go and throw myself at the queen’s feet,” replied the young girl, “and we shall see if she will be deaf to the prayers of two children who are asking for their father’s life.”

Lord Glenarvan shook his head, not that he doubted the heart of her gracious majesty, but he knew that Mary Grant could not reach her.

The supplicants too rarely reach the steps of a throne, and it seems that what the English put on the wheel of the rudders of their ships has been written on the door of royal palaces: *Passengers are requested not to speak to the man at the wheel* .

Lady Helena understood her husband's thoughts; she knew the young girl was about to embark on a futile endeavor; she envisioned these two children now leading a desperate existence. It was then that she had a grand and generous idea.

"Mary Grant," she cried, "wait, my child, and listen to what I am going to say."

The girl was holding her brother's hand and was about to leave. She stopped.

Then Lady Helena, her eyes moist, but her voice firm and her features animated, stepped forward towards her husband.

“Edward,” she told him, “by writing this letter and throwing it into the sea, Captain Grant entrusted it to the care of God himself. God has given it to us! No doubt, God wanted to charge us with the salvation of these unfortunate people.”

"What do you mean, Helena?" asked Lord Glenarvan.

A profound silence reigned throughout the assembly.

“I mean,” Lady Helena continued, “that one should consider oneself fortunate to begin married life with a good deed. Well, you, my dear Edward, to please me, have planned a pleasure trip! But what pleasure could be truer, more useful, than saving unfortunate people whom their country abandons?”

"Helena!" cried Lord Glenarvan.

"Yes, you understand me, Edward! The *Duncan* is a brave and good ship! She can face the southern seas! She can sail around the world, and she will, if necessary! Let's go, Edward! Let's go in search of Captain Grant!"

At these bold words, Lord Glenarvan had stretched out his arms to his young wife; he smiled, he pressed her to his heart, while Mary and Robert kissed his hands. And, during this touching scene, the servants of the castle, moved and enthralled, let out this cry of gratitude from their hearts:

"Hurrah for the Lady of Luss! Hurrah! Three times hurrah for Lord and Lady Glenarvan!"

## Chapter V *The Departure of the "Duncan"*

It has been said that Lady Helena had a strong and generous soul. What she had just done was undeniable proof of this. Lord Glenarvan was rightly proud of this noble woman, capable of understanding and following him. The idea of coming to Captain Grant's aid had already taken hold of him when, in London, he saw his request rejected; if he

had not gone ahead of Lady Helena, it was because he could not bear the thought of parting from her.

But since Lady Helena herself was asking to leave, all hesitation ceased. The castle servants had greeted this proposal with shouts; it was a matter of saving brothers, Scots like themselves, and Lord Glenarvan cordially joined in the hurrahs that acclaimed the Lady of Luss.

With the departure decided, there wasn't an hour to lose. That very day, Lord Glenarvan sent John Mangles orders to bring the *Duncan* to Glasgow and prepare everything for a voyage in the South Seas, which could turn into a circumnavigation. Moreover, in making her proposal, Lady Helena hadn't overestimated the *Duncan 's capabilities* ; built with remarkable strength and speed, it could easily undertake a long voyage.

It was a steam yacht of the finest specimen; it measured two hundred and ten tons, and the first ships that landed in the new world, those of Columbus, Vespucci, Pinçon, Magellan, were of much smaller dimensions.

The *Duncan* had two masts: a foremast with a foresail, topsail, small topsail, and topgallant sail; a mainmast carrying a brigantine and topsail; in addition, a staysail, a large jib, a small jib, and staysails. Its sail plan was sufficient, and it could take advantage of the wind like a simple clipper; but, above all, it relied on the mechanical power contained within its hull.

Its engine, with an effective power of one hundred and sixty horsepower and built according to a new system, had superheating devices that gave its steam greater pressure; it was high-pressure and

drove a double propeller. The *Duncan* , under full steam, could reach speeds exceeding any achieved to date. Indeed, during its trials in the Gulf of Clyde, it had, according to the *patent log* , reached speeds of up to seventeen miles per hour. Therefore, as it was, it could set sail and circumnavigate the globe. John Mangles only had to concern himself with the interior fittings.

His first priority was to enlarge his holds in order to carry as much coal as possible, since it is difficult to replenish fuel supplies en route. The same precaution was taken with the galleys, and John Mangles managed so well that he stockpiled two years' worth of provisions; he had no shortage of money, and even enough to buy a swivel gun which was mounted on the forecastle of the yacht; one never knew what might happen, and it is always good to be able to fire an eight-pound cannonball a distance of four miles.

John Mangles, it must be said, knew his stuff; although he only commanded a pleasure yacht, he was among the best skippers in Glasgow; he was thirty years old, with somewhat rough features, but indicating courage and kindness.

He was a child of the castle, raised by the Glenarvan family, who made him into an excellent sailor. John Mangles often demonstrated skill, energy, and composure on some of his long voyages. When Lord Glenarvan offered him command of the *Duncan* , he accepted it wholeheartedly, for he loved the lord of Malcolm Castle like a brother and had been seeking, without having yet found one, an opportunity to serve him.

The second mate, Tom Austin, was a trustworthy old seaman; twenty-five men, including the captain and first mate, comprised the crew of the *Duncan* ; all were from Dumbarton County; all seasoned sailors, sons of the family's tenants, and formed a veritable clan of good men on board, complete with the traditional *piper bag* . Lord Glenarvan had there a troop of good subjects, happy in their work, devoted, courageous, skilled in the use of weapons as well as in the handling of a ship, and capable of following him on the most perilous expeditions. When the crew of the *Duncan* learned where they were being taken, they could not contain their joyous excitement, and the echoes of the Dumbarton rocks awoke to their enthusiastic hurrahs.

While busy with stowing and provisioning his ship, John Mangles also made sure to prepare Lord and Lady Glenarvan's apartments for a long voyage. He also had to arrange cabins for Captain Grant's children, as Lady Helena had been unable to refuse Mary permission to accompany her aboard the *Duncan* .

As for young Robert, he would have hidden in the yacht's hold rather than not leave. Had he been destined to become a cabin boy, like Nelson and Franklin, he would have embarked on the *Duncan* . How could anyone resist such a little fellow!

They didn't try. They even had to agree to "refuse" him the status of passenger, because, whether cabin boy, novice, or sailor, he wanted to serve. John Mangles was put in charge of teaching him the seaman's trade.

"Well," said Robert, "and he'd better not spare me the blows of the whip if I don't walk straight!"

"Don't worry, my boy," replied Glenarvan seriously, without adding that the use of the cat-o'-nine-tails was forbidden, and, moreover, perfectly useless on board the *Duncan* .

To complete the picture of the passengers, it suffices to mention Major MacNabbs. The major was a man of fifty, with a calm and even countenance, who went wherever he was told to go. He was of excellent and perfect character, modest, silent, peaceful, and gentle; always in agreement about anything and anyone, he never argued, never quarreled, never flew into a rage. He would ascend the stairs to his bedroom or the embankment of a breached curtain wall with the same stride, unmoved by anything in the world, never disturbed, not even by a cannonball, and doubtless he would die without ever having found cause to become angry. This man possessed to the highest degree not only the common courage of the battlefield, that physical bravery solely due to muscular strength, but even more so, moral courage, that is to say, steadfastness of soul.

If he had one fault, it was being utterly Scottish through and through, a pure-blooded Caledonian, a stubborn observer of his country's old customs. Consequently, he never wanted to serve England, and he earned his rank of major in the 42nd Highland Black Watch, whose companies were composed entirely of Scottish gentlemen. Mac Nabbs, as a cousin of the Glenarvans, resided at Malcolm Castle, and as a major, he found it perfectly natural to travel on the *Duncan* .

Such was the crew of this yacht, called upon by unforeseen circumstances to undertake one of the most surprising voyages of modern times. Since its arrival at the *steamboat quay* in Glasgow, it had monopolized public curiosity; a considerable crowd came every day to

visit it; people were only interested in it, only talked about, to the great displeasure of the other captains in the port, among others Captain Burton, commander of the *Scotia* , a magnificent steamer moored next to the *Duncan* , and about to depart for Calcutta.

Given its size, the *Scotia had the right to consider the Duncan* as a mere *fly-boat* .

However, all interest was focused on Lord
Glenarvan's yacht, and was growing day by day.

Indeed, the departure date was approaching, and John Mangles had proven himself skillful and efficient. A month after its trials in the Gulf of Clyde, the *Duncan* , lashed, provisioned, and fitted out, was ready to set sail. Departure was set for August 25th, allowing the yacht to arrive in the Southern Ocean around the beginning of spring.

Lord Glenarvan, as soon as his plan became known, had received some warnings about the hardships and dangers of the journey; but he paid them no heed and prepared to leave Malcolm Castle. Moreover, many who sincerely admired him criticized him. Then, public opinion turned out to be firmly in favor of the Scottish lord, and all the newspapers, with the exception of the "government organs," unanimously condemned the conduct of the Admiralty commissioners in this affair. Furthermore, Lord Glenarvan was unmoved by either blame or praise: he was doing his duty and cared little for anything else.

On August 24th, Glenarvan, Lady Helena, Major Mac Nabbs, Mary and Robert Grant, Mr. Olbinett, the yacht's steward, and his wife, Mrs. Olbinett, who was in Lady Glenarvan's service, left Malcolm Castle after receiving heartfelt farewells from the family's servants. A few hours

later, they were aboard. The people of Glasgow greeted Lady Helena with warm admiration; this young and courageous woman had renounced the quiet pleasures of a life of luxury to come to the aid of shipwrecked sailors.

Lord Glenarvan and his wife's quarters occupied the entire stern of the *Duncan* ; they consisted of two bedrooms, a parlor, and two bathrooms; then there was a common mess, surrounded by six cabins, five of which were occupied by Mary and Robert Grant, Mr. and Mrs. Olbinett, and Major Mac Nabbs. John Mangles' and Tom Austin's cabins were located at the rear and opened onto the deck.

The crew was housed in the orlop deck, and quite comfortably, as the yacht carried no cargo other than coal, provisions, and weapons. John Mangles therefore had ample space for the interior fittings, and he had made good use of it.

The *Duncan* was scheduled to depart during the night of August 24th to 25th, at the ebb tide of three in the morning. But before that, the people of Glasgow witnessed a moving ceremony. At eight o'clock in the evening, Lord Glenarvan and his guests, the entire crew, from the stokers to the captain, all those who were to take part in this voyage of devotion, left the yacht and went to St. Mungo's, the old cathedral of Glasgow.

This ancient church, which remained intact amidst the ruins caused by the Reformation and was so wonderfully described by Walter Scott, received under its massive vaults the passengers and sailors of the *Duncan* .

A huge crowd accompanied them. There, in the great nave, filled with tombs like a cemetery, Reverend Morton implored heaven's blessings and placed the expedition under the protection of Providence. For a moment, Mary Grant's voice rose in the old church. The young woman prayed for her benefactors and shed gentle tears of gratitude before God. Then, the assembly withdrew, overcome by profound emotion. By eleven o'clock, everyone had returned on board. John Mangles and the crew were attending to the final preparations.

At midnight, the fires were lit; the captain gave the order to stoke them briskly, and soon torrents of black smoke mingled with the night mists. The sails of the *Duncan* had been carefully stowed in the canvas cover used to protect them from coal stains, for the wind was blowing from the southwest and could not favor the ship's progress.

At two o'clock, the *Duncan* began to hum with the vibration of its boilers; the pressure gauge read four atmospheres; the heated steam hissed from the valves; the tide was slack; daylight was already sufficient to distinguish the channels of the Clyde between the beacons and the *biggings* , whose lights were gradually fading before the breaking dawn. There was nothing left to do but depart.

John Mangles sent word to Lord Glenarvan, who immediately went up onto the bridge.

Soon the ebb tide was felt; the *Duncan* sounded vigorous blasts of its whistle into the air, cast off its moorings, and freed itself from the surrounding ships; the propeller was put into motion and pushed the yacht into the river channel.

John had not hired a pilot; he knew the Clyde's channels perfectly, and no experienced sailor could have handled his vessel better. The yacht moved at his every signal: with his right hand he controlled the engine; with his left, the rudder, silently and surely. Soon the last factories gave way to villas built here and there on the riverside hills, and the sounds of the city faded into the distance.

An hour later the *Duncan* skimmed the rocks of Dumbarton; two hours later, it was in the Gulf of Clyde; at six o'clock in the morning, it rounded the Cantyre *Mull* , exited the North Channel, and sailed into the open ocean.

## Chapter VI *The Passenger in Cabin Number Six*

During this first day of sailing, the sea was quite rough, and the wind freshened towards the evening; the *Duncan* was being shaken very much; so the ladies did not appear on the quarterdeck; they remained lying down in their cabins, and did well.

But the next day the wind shifted slightly; Captain John set the foresail, the brigantine, and the topsail; the *Duncan* , better supported by the waves, was less affected by the rolling and pitching motions. Lady Helena and Mary Grant were able to join Lord Glenarvan, the major, and the captain on deck at dawn. The sunrise was magnificent. The sun, like a disc of gilded metal produced by the Ruolz process, emerged from the ocean as if from an immense solar bath.

The *Duncan* glided amidst a splendid radiance, and it truly seemed as if its sails were stretching under the force of the sun's rays.

The yacht's guests watched in silent contemplation as the radiant star appeared.

"What an admirable sight!" said Lady Helena at last. "This is the beginning of a fine day. May the wind not be contrary and may it favor the progress of the *Duncan* ."

"It would be impossible to wish for a better one, my dear Helena," replied Lord Glenarvan, "and we have no complaints about this start to the journey."

—Will the crossing be long, my dear Edward?

"Captain John should answer that," said Glenarvan. "
Are we sailing well? Are you satisfied with your ship, John?"

“Very satisfied, Your Honor,” replied John; “it is a wonderful vessel, and a sailor loves to feel it beneath his feet. Never were hull and engine better matched; also, you see how flat the yacht's wake is, and how easily it eludes the waves. We are making seventeen miles an hour. If this speed is maintained, we will cross the finish line in ten days, and before five weeks we will have rounded Cape Horn.”

"You hear, Mary," Lady Helena continued, "within five weeks!"

"Yes, madam," replied the young girl, "I hear, and my heart beat very fast at the captain's words."

"And this sailing, Miss Mary," asked Lord Glenarvan, "how are you coping with it?"

—Quite well, *my lord* , and without too much inconvenience.
Besides, I'll get used to it quickly.

—And what about our young Robert?

“Oh, Robert,” replied John Mangles, “when he’s not up in the engine room, he’s perched on the masthead. I’ll give him to you as a fellow who doesn’t mind seasickness. And look! Do you see him?”

At a gesture from the captain, all eyes turned towards the foremast, and everyone could see Robert hanging from the topping lifts of the small topgallant sail a hundred feet in the air. Mary couldn't stop herself from moving.

"Oh! Rest assured, miss," said John Mangles, "I vouch for him, and I promise to present Captain Grant with a fine fellow before long, for we shall find him again, that worthy captain!"

"Heaven hears you, Mr. John," replied the young girl.

“My dear child,” Lord Glenarvan continued, “there is something providential in all this that should give us good hope. We are not going, we are being led. We are not seeking, we are being guided. And then, look at all these brave people enlisted in the service of such a noble cause. Not only will we succeed in our undertaking, but it will be accomplished without difficulty. I promised Lady Helena a pleasant trip, and I am very much mistaken, or I will keep my word.”

"Edward," said Lady Glenarvan, "you are the best of men."

—No, not at all, but I have the best crew on the best ship. Don't you admire our *Duncan* , Miss Mary?

—On the contrary, *my lord* , replied the young girl, I admire him and as a true connoisseur.

—Ah! Really!

—I played as a child on my father's ships; he should have made me a sailor, and if necessary, I might not be embarrassed to reef or braid a rope.

"Hey! Miss, what are you saying?" exclaimed John Mangles.

"If you speak like that," Lord Glenarvan continued, "you will make a great friend of Captain John, for he cannot conceive of anything in the world that is worth the life of a sailor! He cannot see any other, not even for a woman! Is that not true, John?"

"No doubt, Your Honor," replied the young captain, "and I admit, however, that Miss Grant is better suited to the quarterdeck than to hounding a topgallant sail; but I am nonetheless flattered to hear her speak like that."

"And especially when she admires the *Duncan* ," replied Glenarvan.

"Who deserves it," replied John.

"Well," said Lady Helena, "since you are so proud of your yacht, you make me want to visit it down to the hold, and see how our brave sailors are settled in the steerage."

"Admirably," replied John; "they are right at home here."

“And they are truly at home, my dear Helena,” replied Lord Glenarvan. “This yacht is a portion of our old Caledonia! It is a detached piece of Dumbarton County sailing by special grace, so that we have not left our country! The *Duncan* is Malcolm’s castle, and the ocean is Lake Lomond.”

"Well, my dear Edward, show us around the castle," replied Lady Helena.

“At your service, madam,” said Glenarvan, “but first let me inform Olbinett.”

The yacht's steward was an excellent head waiter, a Scotsman who deserved to be French for his importance; moreover, he performed his duties with zeal and intelligence.

He obeyed his master's orders.

"Olbinett, we'll take a walk before lunch," said Glenarvan, "as if it were a stroll to Tarbet or Lake Katrine; I hope we'll find the table set when we return."

Olbinett bowed gravely.

"Will you accompany us, Major?" said Lady Helena.

"If you order it," replied Mac Nabbs.

“Oh!” said Lord Glenarvan, “the major is engrossed in his cigar smoke; we mustn’t tear him away from it; for I tell you, Miss Mary, he’s a heavy smoker. He’s always smoking, even in his sleep.”

The major gave a sign of assent, and Lord Glenarvan's guests descended into the steerage.

Mac Nabbs, left alone and conversing with himself, as was his custom, but without ever becoming upset, became enveloped in thicker clouds; he remained motionless, watching the wake of the yacht astern. After a few minutes of silent contemplation, he turned and found himself

facing a new figure. If anything had been possible, the major would have been surprised by this encounter, for this passenger was a complete stranger to him.

This tall, thin, and gaunt man could have been forty; he resembled a long nail with a large head; indeed, his head was broad and strong, his forehead high, his nose elongated, his mouth large, and his chin strongly aquiline. As for his eyes, they were hidden behind enormous round spectacles, and his gaze seemed to have that indecisive quality peculiar to those with night vision. His features suggested an intelligent and cheerful man; he didn't have the forbidding air of those serious people who never laugh, on principle, and whose mediocrity is masked by a serious expression. Far from it. The easygoing, amiable nonchalance of this stranger clearly demonstrated that he knew how to see the bright side of people and things. But even before he had spoken, one sensed he was talkative, and above all, distracted, in the manner of those who don't see what they look at and don't hear what they listen to. He was wearing a traveling cap, sturdy yellow boots and leather gaiters, brown velvet trousers and a jacket of the same material, whose countless pockets seemed stuffed with notebooks, diaries, journals, wallets, and a thousand other objects as cumbersome as they were useless, not to mention a telescope he carried over his shoulder.

The agitation of this stranger contrasted singularly with the placidity of the major; he circled around mac Nabbs, he looked at him, he questioned him with his eyes, without the latter worrying about where he came from, where he was going, why he was on board the *Duncan* .

When this enigmatic character saw his attempts thwarted by the major's indifference, he seized his spyglass, which at its greatest

extension measured four feet in length, and, motionless, with his legs apart, like a post on a great road, he aimed his instrument at that line where the sky and the water merged into a single horizon; after five minutes of examination, he lowered his spyglass, and, placing it on the deck, he leaned on it as he would have done with a cane; but immediately the compartments of the telescope slid one on top of the other, it collapsed into itself, and the new passenger, whose point of support suddenly lacked, nearly fell flat on his face at the foot of the mainmast.

Anyone else would at least have smiled in the major's place.

The major didn't flinch. The stranger then made his decision.

"Steward!" he shouted, with an accent that denoted a foreigner.

And he waited. No one appeared.

"Steward!" he repeated in a louder voice.

Mr. Olbinett was passing by at that moment, on his way to the galley located under the forecastle. How surprised he was to hear himself being addressed by this tall individual whom he did not know!

"Where did this character come from?" he wondered. "A friend of Lord Glenarvan?
That's impossible."

However, he climbed onto the quarterdeck and approached the stranger.

"Are you the building's steward?" he asked him.

“Yes, sir,” replied Olbinett, “but I do not have the honor…”

—I am the passenger in cabin number six.

"Number six?" repeated the steward.

—No doubt. And what is your name?…

—Olbinett.

"Well, Olbinett, my friend," replied the stranger in cabin number six, "we must think about lunch, and quickly. It's been thirty-six hours since I've eaten, or rather thirty-six hours since I've done anything but sleep, which is forgivable for a man who came straight from Paris to Glasgow. What time is lunch, please?"

"At nine o'clock," replied Olbinett mechanically.

The stranger wanted to check his watch, but it took a long time, as he only found it in his ninth pocket.

"Well," he said, "it's not yet eight o'clock. Well then, Olbinett, a biscuit and a glass of sherry to tide me over, for I am falling from starvation."

Olbinett listened without understanding; besides, the stranger was always talking and went from one subject to another with extreme volubility.

"Well," he said, "and the captain? The captain isn't up yet! And the first mate? What's the first mate doing? Is he asleep too? The weather is fine, fortunately, the wind is favorable, and the ship is sailing by itself."

Precisely, and as he was speaking thus, John Mangles appeared at the quarterdeck stairs.

"Here's the captain," said Olbinett.

"Ah! Delighted," cried the stranger, "delighted, Captain Burton, to make your acquaintance!"

If anyone was astonished, it was certainly John Mangles, no less at being called "Captain Burton" than at seeing this stranger on board.

The other one continued even more vigorously:

"Allow me to shake your hand," he said, "and if I didn't do so the night before last, it's because one shouldn't inconvenience anyone at the time of departure. But today, Captain, I am truly happy to make contact with you."

John Mangles opened his eyes wide, looking first at
Olbinett, then at this newcomer.

"Now," he continued, "the introduction is over, my dear captain, and we are like old friends. Let's talk, then, and tell me, are you happy with the *Scotia?"*

"What do you mean by *Scotia?"* said John Mangles finally.

—But the *Scotia* that's carrying us, a fine ship whose physical qualities have been praised to me, as well as the moral qualities of its captain, the brave Captain Burton. Are you related to the great African explorer of that name? A daring man. My compliments, then!

"Sir," John Mangles continued, "not only am I not related to the traveler Burton, but I am not even Captain Burton."

—Ah! said the stranger, so it is to the second mate of the *Scotia* , Mr. Burdness, that I am speaking at this moment?

"Mr. Burdness?" replied John Mangles, who was beginning to suspect the truth.

But was he dealing with a madman or a fool? This was the question in his mind, and he was about to explain himself categorically, when Lord Glenarvan, his wife and Miss Grant came back up on the deck.

The stranger saw them and cried out:

"Ah! Passengers! Female passengers! Perfect. I hope, Mr. Burdness, that you will introduce me…"

And advancing with perfect ease, without waiting for John Mangles to intervene:

"Madam," he said to Miss Grant, "Miss," he said to Lady Helena, "Sir..." he added, addressing Lord Glenarvan.

“Lord Glenarvan,” said John Mangles.

“ *My lord* ,” the stranger then replied, “I beg your pardon for introducing myself; but at sea, one must relax one’s etiquette a little; I hope we will quickly become acquainted, and that in the company of these ladies the crossing of the *Scotia* will seem as short as it is pleasant.”

Lady Helena and Miss Grant were speechless. They couldn't understand the presence of this intruder on the quarterdeck of the *Duncan* .

"Sir," said Glenarvan then, "to whom do I have the honor of speaking?"

—To Jacques-Éliacin-François-Marie Paganel, secretary of the Paris Geographical Society, corresponding member of the societies of Berlin, Bombay, Darmstadt, Leipzig, London, Petersburg, Vienna, and New York, honorary member of the Royal Geographical and Ethnographic Institute of the East Indies, who, after spending twenty years of his life practicing armchair geography, wanted to enter into activist science, and is heading towards India to connect the works of the great travelers.

## Chapter VII *Where Jacques Paganel Comes From and Where He's Going*

The secretary of the geographical society must have been a pleasant fellow, for all this was said with great grace. Lord Glenarvan, moreover, knew perfectly well who he was dealing with; the name and merit of Jacques Paganel were well known to him; his geographical works, his reports on modern discoveries published in the society's bulletins, his correspondence with the world, made him one of the most distinguished scholars in France. Therefore, Glenarvan cordially extended his hand to his unexpected guest.

"And now that our introductions are over," he added, "would you allow me, Mr. Paganel, to ask you a question?"

—Twenty questions, *my lord* , replied Jacques Paganel; it will always be a pleasure for me to converse with you.

—You arrived on board this ship the night before last?

“Yes, *my lord* , the night before last, at eight o’clock. I jumped from the *Caledonian Railway* into a cab, and from the cab into the *Scotia* , where I had reserved cabin number six from Paris. The night was dark. I saw no one on board. Now, feeling tired from thirty hours of travel, and knowing that to avoid seasickness it is a good precaution to go to bed upon arrival and not move from one's seat during the first few days of the crossing, I went to bed immediately, and I slept soundly for thirty-six hours, I assure you.”

Jacques Paganel's listeners now knew what to expect regarding his presence on board.

The French traveler, having mistaken the ship for another, had embarked while the crew of the *Duncan* was attending the ceremony at Saint Mungo's. Everything was explained. But what would the learned geographer say when he learned the name and destination of the ship on which he had traveled?

"So, Mr. Paganel," said Glenarvan, "you have chosen Calcutta as the starting point for your travels?"

—Yes, *my lord* . Seeing India is an idea I've cherished all my life. It's my greatest dream, finally coming true in the land of elephants and *taugs* .

—So, Mr. Paganel, you would not be indifferent to visiting another country?

—No, *my lord* , that would be unpleasant for me, as I have recommendations for Lord Somerset, the Governor-General of India,

and a mission from the Geographical Society that I wish to fulfill.

—Ah! You have a mission?

“Yes, a worthwhile and intriguing journey to undertake, the itinerary of which has been drawn up by my learned friend and colleague, Vivien De Saint-Martin. It involves, in effect, following in the footsteps of the Schlaginweit brothers, Colonel Waugh, Webb, Hodgson, the missionaries Huc and Gabet, Moorcroft, Jules Remy, and so many other famous travelers. I intend to succeed where the missionary Krick unfortunately failed in 1846; in short, to trace the course of the Yaru-Dzangbo-Tchou, which flows through Tibet for a distance of fifteen hundred kilometers, along the northern base of the Himalayas, and finally to determine whether this river joins the Brahmaputra in northeastern Assam. The gold medal, *my lord* , is assured to the traveler who thus succeeds in fulfilling one of the most ardent *desires* of Indian geography.”

Paganel was magnificent. He spoke with superb animation.
He let himself be carried away on the swift wings of imagination. It would have been as impossible to stop him as the Rhine at the Schaffhausen waterfalls.

"Mr. Jacques Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan, after a moment of silence, "this is certainly a fine voyage and one for which science will be very grateful; but I do not wish to prolong your error any longer, and, for the moment at least, you must renounce the pleasure of visiting the Indies.

—Give it up! And why?

—Because you are turning your back on the Indian peninsula.

—What! Captain Burton…

"I am not Captain Burton," replied John Mangles.

—But the *Scotia?*

"But that ship isn't the *Scotia* !"

Paganel's astonishment cannot be described.

He looked in turn at Lord Glenarvan, still serious, Lady Helena and Mary Grant, whose features expressed sympathetic sorrow, John Mangles who was smiling, and the major who did not flinch; then, raising his shoulders and bringing his spectacles from his forehead to his eyes:

"What a joke!" he exclaimed.

But at that moment his eyes met the steering wheel, which bore these two words as an epigraph:

*Duncan Glasgow*

"The *Duncan!* The *Duncan!* " he cried, letting out a real cry of despair!

Then, tumbling down the stairs of the quarterdeck, he rushed towards his cabin.

As soon as the unfortunate scholar had disappeared, no one on board, except the major, could keep a straight face, and laughter spread even to the sailors. To take the wrong railway! Fine! To take the Edinburgh train for the Dumbarton one. Fair enough! But to board the wrong ship, and

sail for Chile when you want to go to India, that's the mark of a truly remarkable lapse in judgment.

“Moreover, this doesn’t surprise me coming from Jacques Paganel,” said Glenarvan; “he is often cited for similar misadventures. He once published a famous map of America, in which he had included Japan. This doesn’t prevent him from being a distinguished scholar and one of the best geographers in France.”

"But what are we going to do with this poor gentleman?" said Lady Helena. "We can't take him to Patagonia."

"Why not?" replied Mac Nabbs gravely; "we are not responsible for his distractions. Suppose he were on a train, would he have it stopped?"

"No, but he would get off at the next station," Lady
Helena continued.

"Well," said Glenarvan, "that's what he can do, if he likes, during our next break."

At that moment, Paganel, pitiful and ashamed, was climbing back onto the quarterdeck, having made sure his luggage was on board. He kept repeating those unfortunate words: "The *Duncan!* The *Duncan!"*

He could find no others in his vocabulary. He paced back and forth, examining the yacht's masts and questioning the silent horizon of the open sea. Finally, he returned to Lord Glenarvan:

"And what about *Duncan* ?... he said.

—In America, Mr. Paganel.

—And more specifically?...

—To Concepción.

"To Chile! To Chile!" cried the unfortunate geographer. "And my mission to India! But what will Mr. De Quatrefages, the president of the central commission, say! And Mr. D'Avezac! And Mr. Cortambert! And Mr. Vivien De Saint-Martin! How will I represent myself at the society's meetings!"

“Now then, Monsieur Paganel,” replied Glenarvan, “don’t despair. Everything can be arranged, and you will have suffered only a relatively minor delay. The Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou will still be waiting for you in the mountains of Tibet. We will soon put in at Madeira, and there you will find a ship that will take you back to Europe.”

"Thank you, *my lord* , we must resign ourselves to it. But, I must say, this is an extraordinary adventure, and these things only happen to me. And my cabin is being held aboard the *Scotia!"*

—Ah! As for the *Scotia* , I urge you to give it up temporarily.

—But, said Paganel, after examining the ship again, the *Duncan* is a pleasure yacht?

"Yes, sir," replied John Mangles, "and it belongs to his honor, Lord Glenarvan."

—Who asks you to make generous use of his hospitality, said Glenarvan.

“A thousand thanks, *my lord* ,” replied Paganel; “I am truly touched by your courtesy; but allow me a simple observation: India is a beautiful

country; it offers travelers marvelous surprises; the ladies are doubtless unaware of it… Well, the man at the helm would only have to turn the wheel, and the yacht *Duncan* would sail as easily to Calcutta as to Concepción; and since he is on a pleasure voyage…”

The nods that greeted Paganel's proposal did not allow him to continue developing it. He stopped short.

“Mr. Paganel,” said Lady Helena, “if this were merely a pleasure trip, I would reply: Let us all go to the Indies together, and Lord Glenarvan would not disapprove. But the *Duncan* is going to repatriate shipwrecked sailors abandoned on the coast of Patagonia, and it cannot change such a humane destination…”

Within minutes, the French traveler was made aware of the situation; he learned, not without emotion, of the providential encounter of the documents, the story of Captain Grant, and Lady Helena's generous offer.

“Madam,” he said, “allow me to admire your conduct in all this, and to admire it without reservation. Let your yacht continue on its way; I would reproach myself for delaying it by a single day.”

"So, will you join us in our research?" asked Lady
Helena.

"That's impossible, madam, I have to fulfill my mission.
I'll disembark during your next break..."

—In Madeira then, said John Mangles.

—To Madeira, then. I will only be one hundred and eighty leagues from
Lisbon, and I will wait there for means of transport.

"Well, Monsieur Paganel," said Glenarvan, "it will be done according to your wishes, and for my part, I am happy to be able to offer you hospitality on board for a few days. May you not be too bored in our company!"

“Oh! *My lord* ,” cried the scholar, “I am still too happy to have been so pleasantly mistaken! Nevertheless, it is a most ridiculous situation for a man to embark for India and sail for America!”

Despite this melancholy reflection, Paganel resigned himself to a delay that he could not prevent.

He was amiable, cheerful, and even playful; he charmed the ladies with his good humor; before the day was out, he was everyone's friend. At his request, the famous document was given to him. He studied it carefully, at length, meticulously. No other interpretation seemed possible to him. Mary Grant and her brother aroused his keenest interest.

He gave them good hope. His foresight and the undeniable success he predicted for *Duncan* brought a smile to the young girl's face. Truly, without his mission, he would have set out in search of Captain Grant!

As for Lady Helena, when he learned she was William Tuffnel's daughter, there was an explosion of admiring exclamations. He had known her father. What a bold scholar! How many letters they exchanged when William Tuffnel was a corresponding member of the

society! It was he himself who had introduced her to Madame Malte-Brun! What an encounter, and what a pleasure it was to travel with William Tuffnel's daughter!

Finally, he asked Lady Helena for permission to kiss her. Lady Glenarvan consented, although it was perhaps a little "inappropriate".

## Chapter VIII *One more brave man aboard the "Duncan"*

However, the yacht, aided by the currents off North Africa, was making rapid progress towards the equator. On August 30th, the Madeira group was sighted. Glenarvan, true to his word, offered his new guest a place to put ashore.

"My dear lord," replied Paganel, "I will not make any formalities with you. Before my arrival on board, did you intend to stop at Madeira?"

—No, said Glenarvan.

“Well, allow me to take advantage of the consequences of my unfortunate oversight. Madeira is an overly familiar island. It no longer offers anything of interest to a geographer. Everything has been said and written about this group of islands, which is, moreover, in complete decline from a viticultural point of view. Imagine, there are no more vines in Madeira! The wine harvest, which in 1813 amounted to twenty-two thousand pipes, fell by 1845 to two thousand six hundred and sixty-nine. Today, it doesn't even reach five hundred! It's a distressing sight. So, if you are indifferent to stopping in the Canaries?”

"Let's put in at the Canaries," replied Glenarvan. "That won't take us off our route."

"I know, my dear lord. In the Canary Islands, you see, there are three groups to study, not to mention the peak of Tenerife, which I have always longed to see. This is an opportunity. I am taking advantage of it, and, while waiting for a ship to take me back to Europe, I will climb this famous mountain."

"As you wish, my dear Paganel," replied Lord
Glenarvan, who could not help but smile.

And he was right to smile.

The Canary Islands are not far from Madeira. Only two hundred and fifty miles separate the two groups, an insignificant distance for such a good sailing vessel as the *Duncan* .

On August 31st, at two o'clock in the afternoon, John Mangles and Paganel were walking on the quarterdeck. The Frenchman was pressing his companion with lively questions about Chile; suddenly the captain interrupted him, and pointing to a point on the horizon to the south:

"Mr. Paganel?" he said.

"My dear captain," replied the scholar.

—Please look in that direction. Can't you see anything?

-Nothing.

—You're not looking where you should. It's not on the horizon, but above, in the clouds.

—In the clouds? I've looked everywhere…

—Now, hold on by the bowsprit.

—I can't see anything.

"That's what you don't want to see. In any case, and although we're forty miles away, do you hear me? The peak of Tenerife is perfectly visible above the horizon."

Whether Paganel wanted to see it or not, he had to face the facts a few hours later, unless he admitted to being blind.

"You finally see him?" John Mangles said to him.

—Yes, yes, perfectly, replied Paganel; and that, he added disdainfully, that is what is called the peak of Tenerife?

—Himself.

—It appears to be of rather mediocre height.

—However, it is elevated eleven thousand feet above sea level.

—It's not worth Mont Blanc.

—It's possible, but when it comes time to climb it, you might find it high enough.

"Oh! Climb it! Climb it, my dear Captain, what good would it do, I pray you, after Messrs. De Humboldt and Bonplan? What a genius, that Humboldt! He ascended that mountain; he gave a description that leaves nothing to be desired; he identified its five zones: the wine zone, the laurel zone, the pine zone, the alpine heather zone, and finally, the barren zone. He set foot on the very summit of the peak, and there, he

didn't even have room to sit. From the top of the mountain, his view encompassed an area equal to a quarter of Spain. Then he explored the volcano right down to its bowels, and he reached the bottom of its extinct crater. What do you expect me to do after such a great man, I ask you?"

“Indeed,” replied John Mangles, “there’s nothing left to glean. It’s unfortunate, because you’ll be very bored waiting for a ship in the port of Tenerife. There’s not much to be done there.”

"Except for mine," said Paganel, laughing. "But, my dear Mangles, don't the Cape Verde islands offer important stopping points?"

—Yes, really. Nothing could be easier than embarking from Villa Praia.

“Not to mention an advantage that shouldn’t be overlooked,” replied Paganel, “the Cape Verde Islands are not far from Senegal, where I’ll find fellow countrymen. I know this group is considered rather uninteresting, savage, and unhealthy; but everything is fascinating to the geographer’s eye. Seeing is a science. There are people who don’t know how to see, and who travel with as much intelligence as a crustacean. Believe me, I don’t belong to their school of thought.”

“At your leisure, Mr. Paganel,” replied John Mangles; “I am certain that geographical science will benefit from your stay in the Cape Verde Islands. We are scheduled to stop there precisely to collect coal. Your arrival will therefore cause us no delay.”

That said, the captain set the course so as to pass west of the Canaries; the famous peak was left to port, and the *Duncan* , continuing

its rapid march, crossed the Tropic of Cancer on September 2, at five o'clock in the morning.

The weather then began to change. It was the humid, heavy atmosphere of the rainy season, "the tempo of the waters," as the Spanish say, a difficult season for travelers, but beneficial to the inhabitants of the African islands, who lack trees and consequently water. The very rough sea prevented the passengers from standing on deck; but the conversations in the mess hall were nonetheless quite lively.

On September 3rd, Paganel began gathering his baggage for his next landing. The *Duncan* was sailing among the Cape Verde Islands; it passed Salt Island, a veritable graveyard of sand, barren and desolate; after skirting vast coral banks, it left Saint Jacques Island abeam, traversed from north to south by a chain of basalt mountains ending in two high hills. Then John Mangles entered the bay of Villa Praia and soon anchored off the town in eight fathoms of water. The weather was dreadful and the surf excessively violent, although the bay was sheltered from the open sea winds. The rain fell in torrents and barely allowed one to see the town, built on a terraced plain that abutted volcanic buttresses three hundred feet high. The sight of the island through this thick curtain of rain was heartbreaking.

Lady Helena was unable to proceed with her plan to visit the town; loading the coal was proving extremely difficult. The passengers of the *Duncan* were thus confined to the quarterdeck, while the sea and sky mingled in an indescribable chaos. The weather naturally became the main topic of conversation on board. Everyone had their say, except the

major, who would have witnessed the general deluge with complete indifference. Paganel paced back and forth, nodding his head.

"It was done on purpose," he said.

"It is certain," replied Glenarvan, "that the elements are turning against you."

—Yet I will be right.

"You cannot face such rain," said Lady Helena.

—Me, madam, absolutely. I only fear for my luggage and instruments. Everything will be lost.

“The only thing to fear is the disembarkation,” Glenarvan continued. “Once you reach Villa Praia, your accommodations won’t be too bad; not very clean, for example: in the company of monkeys and pigs, whose company isn’t always pleasant. But a traveler doesn’t look that closely. First, you must hope that in seven or eight months you’ll be able to embark for Europe.”

"Seven or eight months!" exclaimed Paganel.

—At least. The Cape Verde islands aren't very busy with ships during the rainy season. But you can use your time productively. This archipelago is still relatively unknown; in topography, climatology, ethnography, and hypsometry, there's much to be done.

"You will have rivers to recognize," said Lady Helena.

"There aren't any, madam," replied Paganel.

—Well, rivers?

—There aren't any either.

—Watercourses then?

—No more.

"Well," said the major, "you will fall back on the forests."

—To make forests, you need trees; but there are no trees.

"A beautiful country!" replied the major.

"Take comfort, my dear Paganel," said Glenarvan then, "at least you will have mountains."

—Oh! Little high and little interesting, *my lord* . Besides, this work has been done.

—Done! said Glenarvan.

—Yes, that's just my usual luck. If, in the Canaries, I found myself in the presence of Humboldt's work, here, I find myself preceded by a geologist, Mr. Charles Sainte-Claire Deville!

—Not possible?

“No doubt,” replied Paganel pitifully. “This scholar was aboard the state corvette , *the ‘Decided ,’* during its stopover in the Cape Verde Islands, and he visited the most interesting peak in the group, the volcano on Fogo Island. What do you expect me to do after him?”

“That is truly regrettable,” replied Lady Helena. “
What will become of you, Monsieur Paganel?”

Paganel remained silent for a few moments.

“Clearly,” Glenarvan continued, “you would have been better off landing in Madeira, even though there’s no more wine!”

Another silence from the learned secretary of the geographical society.

"I would wait," said the major, exactly as if he had said: I would not wait.

“My dear Glenarvan,” Paganel then continued, “where do you intend to release your equipment now?”

—Oh! Not before Concepcion.

—Good heavens! That takes me considerably away from India.

—No, as long as you've passed Cape Horn, you're getting closer.

—I suspected as much.

—Besides, Glenarvan continued with the utmost seriousness, when one goes to India, whether it is the East or the West, it does not matter.

—How can it not matter!

—Not to mention that the inhabitants of the Patagonian pampas are just as much Indians as the natives of Punjab.

—Ah! Good heavens, *my lord* , cried Paganel, that's a reason I would never have imagined!

—And besides, my dear Paganel, one can win the gold medal anywhere; there is everywhere to do, to search, to discover, in the Cordillera ranges as in the mountains of Tibet.

—But what about the course of the Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou?

—Good! You will replace it with the Rio Colorado! Here is a little-known river, and one which on maps flows a little too much according to the whims of geographers.

—I know, my dear lord, there are errors of several degrees here. Oh! I have no doubt that, at my request, the Geographical Society would have sent me to Patagonia as well as to India. But I didn't think of it.

—The effect of your usual distractions.

"Well, Mr. Paganel, will you accompany us?" said Lady Helena in her most engaging voice.

—Madam, and my mission?

"I'm warning you that we'll be passing through the Strait of Magellan," Glenarvan continued.

— *My lord* , you are a tempter.

—I'll add that we'll be visiting Port-Famine!

"Port-Famine," cried the Frenchman, assailed from all sides, "that port famous in geographical annals!"

—Consider also, Mr. Paganel, continued Lady Helena, that in this undertaking you will have the right to associate the name of France with that of Scotland.

—Yes, probably!

—A geographer can be of great service to our expedition, and what could be more beautiful than putting science at the service of humanity?

—That's well said, madam!

—Believe me. Leave it to chance, or rather providence.
Imitate us. It sent us this document, we left.
It throws you aboard the *Duncan* , don't leave it again.

"Do you want me to tell you, my good friends?"
Paganel then replied; "well, you very much want me to stay!"

"And you, Paganel, you're dying to stay,"
Glenarvan replied.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the learned geographer, "but I was afraid of being indiscreet!"

## Chapter IX *The Strait of Magellan*

Joy erupted on board when Paganel's decision was announced. Young Robert threw his arms around him with great enthusiasm. The worthy

secretary nearly fell backward.

"He's a tough little fellow," he said, "I'll teach him geography."

Now, as John Mangles was making him a sailor, Glenarvan a man of heart, the major a cool-headed boy, Lady Helena a kind and generous person, and Mary Grant a student grateful to such teachers, Robert was obviously destined to become an accomplished gentleman one day.

The *Duncan* quickly finished loading its coal, then, leaving these dismal parts, it headed west towards the current off the coast of Brazil, and, on September 7, after crossing the equator under a fine northerly breeze, it entered the southern hemisphere.

The crossing was therefore uneventful. Everyone was hopeful. In this expedition in search of Captain Grant, the sum of the probabilities seemed to increase every day.

One of the most confident people on board was the captain. But his confidence stemmed primarily from his deep desire to see Miss Mary happy and comforted. He had developed a particular fondness for this young woman; and he concealed this feeling so well that, except for Mary Grant and himself, everyone on board the *Duncan noticed it* .

As for the learned geographer, he was probably the happiest man in the Southern Hemisphere; he spent his days studying the maps with which he covered the mess table; hence his daily discussions with Mr. Olbinett, who couldn't set the table. But Paganel had all the quarterdeck guests on his side, except the major, who was quite indifferent to geographical matters, especially at dinnertime. Moreover, having discovered a whole cargo of rather mismatched books in the lockers of

the second mate, and among them a number of Spanish works, Paganel resolved to learn the language of Cervantes, which no one on board knew. This would facilitate his research on the Chilean coast. Thanks to his aptitude for multilingualism, he didn't despair of speaking this new language fluently upon arriving in Concepción. So he studied diligently, and one could constantly hear him muttering disparate syllables.

During his leisure time, he made sure to give young Robert practical instruction, and he taught him the history of these coasts which the *Duncan* was approaching so rapidly.

The date was September 10th, and the location was 57° 3' latitude and 31° 15' longitude. On that day, Glenarvan learned something that even the most educated people probably don't know. Paganel was recounting the history of America, and to get to the great navigators, whose yacht was then following the route, he went back to Christopher Columbus; then he finished by saying that the famous Genoese had died without knowing he had discovered a new world. The entire audience cried out in protest. Paganel persisted in his assertion.

“Nothing is more certain,” he added. “I don’t want to diminish Columbus’s glory, but the fact remains. At the end of the fifteenth century, people were preoccupied with only one thing: facilitating communication with Asia and seeking the East by way of the Western routes; in short, going by the shortest route to the ‘land of spices.’ This is what Columbus attempted. He made four voyages; he reached America at the coasts of Cumana, Honduras, Mosquitos, Nicaragua, Veragua, Costa Rica, and Panama, which he mistook for the lands of Japan and China, and died without ever realizing the existence of the great continent to which he would not even lend his name!”

"I want to believe you, my dear Paganel," replied Glenarvan; "however, you will allow me to be surprised, and to ask you which navigators have recognized the truth about Columbus's discoveries?"

His successors, Ojeda, who had already accompanied him on his voyages, as well as Vincent Pinzón, Vespuze, Mendoza, Bastidas, Cabral, Solis, and Balboa, sailed along the eastern coasts of America. They delineated them as they sailed southward, carried along, like us, three hundred and sixty years before us, by this current that sweeps us along! Look, my friends, we have crossed the equator at the very spot where Pinzón crossed it in the last year of the fifteenth century, and we are approaching that eighth degree of southern latitude under which he reached the lands of Brazil. A year later, the Portuguese Cabral sailed down to the port of Seguro. Then Vespuze, in his third expedition in 1502, went even further south. In 1508, Vincent Pinzón and Solis joined forces to explore the American coasts, and in 1514, Solis discovered the mouth of the *Río* de la Plata, where he was devoured by the natives, leaving Magellan the glory of circumnavigating the continent. This great navigator, in 1519, set sail with five ships, followed the coasts of Patagonia, discovered Port Desiré and Port San Julian, where he made long stops, found, at fifty-two degrees latitude, the Strait of Eleven Thousand Virgins, which would bear his name, and, on November 28, 1520, he entered the Pacific Ocean. Ah! What joy he must have felt, and what emotion filled his heart, when he saw a new sea sparkling on the horizon under the sun's rays!

"Yes, Mr. Paganel," exclaimed Robert Grant, thrilled by the geographer's words, "I wish I had been there!"

—Me too, my boy, and I would not have missed such an opportunity, if heaven had made me be born three hundred years earlier!

"That would have been unfortunate for us, Mr. Paganel," replied Lady Helena, "for you would not now be on the quarterdeck of the *Duncan* telling us this story."

“Another person could have said it in my place, madam, and would have added that the exploration of the west coast is due to the Pizarro brothers. These daring adventurers were great founders of cities. Cusco, Quito, Lima, Santiago, Villarica, Valparaiso, and Concepción, where *Duncan* takes us, are their work. At that time, Pizarro’s discoveries were linked to those of Magellan, and the development of the American coasts appeared on maps, to the great satisfaction of the scholars of the Old World.”

"Well, I," said Robert, "would not have been satisfied yet."

"Why?" replied Mary, considering her younger brother who was fascinated by the history of these discoveries.

"Yes, my boy, why?" asked Lord Glenarvan with the most encouraging smile.

—Because I would have liked to know what lay beyond the Strait of Magellan.

“Bravo, my friend,” replied Paganel, “and I too would have liked to know if the continent extended to the pole, or if there was an open sea, as Drake, one of your compatriots, supposed, *my lord* .” It is therefore evident that if Robert Grant and Jacques Paganel had lived in the 17th century, they would have embarked in the wake of Shouten and

Lemaire, two Dutchmen very curious to know the final word on this geographical enigma.

"Were they scholars?" asked Lady Helena.

—No, but daring merchants, who were rather unconcerned by the scientific aspect of the discoveries. There was then a Dutch East India Company, which had an absolute right over all trade conducted through the Strait of Magellan. Now, as at that time no other passage to reach Asia via the western routes was known, this privilege constituted a veritable monopoly. Some merchants therefore wanted to fight against this monopoly by discovering another strait, and among them was a certain Isaac Lemaire, an intelligent and educated man. He financed an expedition commanded by his nephew, Jacob Lemaire, and Shouten, a good sailor from Horn. These bold navigators set sail in June 1615, nearly a century after Magellan; They discovered the Strait of Lemaire, between Tierra del Fuego and the land of the states, and, on February 12, 1616, they rounded that famous Cape Horn, which, better than its brother, the Cape of Good Hope, would have deserved to be called the Cape of Storms!

"Yes, of course, I would have liked to be there!" exclaimed Robert.

“And you would have drawn from the very source of the most vivid emotions, my boy,” Paganel continued, becoming animated. “Is there, indeed, a truer satisfaction, a more real pleasure, than that of the navigator who plots his discoveries on the ship's chart? He sees the lands gradually take shape before his eyes, island by island, promontory by promontory, and, as it were, emerge from the heart of the waves! At first, the boundary lines are vague, broken, interrupted! Here a solitary

cape, there an isolated bay, further on a gulf lost in space. Then the discoveries are completed, the lines meet, the dotted lines of the charts give way to solid lines; the bays indent definite coastlines, the capes rest upon certain shores; finally, the new continent, with its lakes, its rivers and streams, its mountains, its valleys and plains, its villages, its towns and capitals, unfolds across the globe in all its magnificent splendor!" Ah! My friends, a discoverer of lands is a true inventor! He experiences the emotions and surprises! But now this mine is practically exhausted! We've seen everything, recognized everything, invented everything in terms of continents or new worlds, and we, the newcomers to geographical science, have nothing left to do?

"Yes, my dear Paganel," replied Glenarvan.

—And what then?

"That's what we're doing!"

However, the *Duncan* was sailing along the Vespuce and Magellan route with marvelous speed. On September 15th, it crossed the Tropic of Capricorn, and the ship set its course for the entrance to the famous strait. Several times the low-lying coasts of Patagonia were sighted, but only as a barely visible line on the horizon; they were estimated to be more than ten miles away, and Paganel's famous spyglass gave him only a vague idea of these American shores.

On September 25th, the *Duncan* was at the Strait of Magellan. It entered without hesitation. This route is generally preferred by steamships traveling to the Pacific Ocean. Its exact length is only three hundred and seventy-six miles; the largest vessels find deep water everywhere, even close to its shores, a bottom of excellent holding,

numerous freshwater springs, rivers teeming with fish, forests rich in game, safe and easy anchorages in twenty places, and finally, a thousand resources that are lacking in the Strait of Lemaire and the terrible rocks of Cape Horn, incessantly visited by hurricanes and storms.

During the first few hours of the voyage, that is, over a distance of sixty to eighty miles, as far as Cape Gregory, the coasts were low and sandy. Jacques Paganel didn't want to miss a single view or detail of the strait. The crossing was expected to last barely thirty-six hours, and this ever-changing panorama of both shores was well worth the scholar's effort to admire under the splendid light of the southern sun. No inhabitants appeared on the northern lands; only a few wretched Fuegians wandered on the barren rocks of Tierra del Fuego. Paganel therefore regretted not seeing any Patagonians, which greatly angered him, much to the amusement of his traveling companions.

"A Patagonia without Patagonians," he said, "is no longer a Patagonia.

—Patience, my worthy geographer, replied Glenarvan, we shall see Patagonians.

—I'm not sure.

"But they do exist," said Lady Helena.

—I highly doubt it, madam, since I don't see any.

—Finally, this name Patagonians, which means "big feet" in Spanish, was not given to imaginary beings.

"Oh! The name doesn't matter," replied Paganel, who persisted in his idea to liven up the discussion, "and besides, to tell the truth, we don't know what their names are!"

"For example!" exclaimed Glenarvan. "Did you know that, Major?"

"No," replied Mac Nabbs, "and I wouldn't give a pound of Scotland to know that."

“You will hear it, though,” replied Paganel, the indifferent major. “If Magellan called the natives of these lands Patagonians, the Fuegians call them Tiremenen, the Chileans Caucalhues, the colonists of Carmen Tehuelches, the Araucanians Huiliches; Bougainville gives them the name Chaouha, Falkner that of Tehuelhets! They themselves refer to themselves by the general name Inaken! I ask you how you expect us to recognize each other, and whether a people with so many names can even exist!”

"Now that's an argument!" replied Lady Helena.

"Let's admit it," Glenarvan continued; "but our friend Paganel will admit, I think, that if there is doubt about the name of the Patagonians, there is at least certainty about their size!"

"I would never admit to such an enormity," replied Paganel.

"They are tall," said Glenarvan.

—I don't know.

"Little ones?" asked Lady Helena.

—No one can say for sure.

"So, what are the means, then?" said Mac Nabbs, "to reconcile everything."

—I don't know any more than that.

"That's a bit much," exclaimed Glenarvan; "the travelers who saw them..."

"The travelers who saw them," replied the geographer, "do not agree at all. Magellan says that his head barely touched their belts!"

-Well!

—Yes, but Drake claims that the English are taller than the tallest Patagonian!

"Oh! Englishmen, that's possible," replied the major disdainfully; "but if it were Scotsmen!"

"Cavendish insists they are large and robust," Paganel continued. "Hawkins makes them giants. Lemaire and Shouten give them eleven feet in height."

"Well, these are trustworthy people," said Glenarvan.

—Yes, just as much as Wood, Narborough and Falkner, who found them to be of average height. It is true that Byron, la Giraudais, Bougainville, Wallis and Carteret claim that the Patagonians are six feet six inches tall, while M D'Orbigny, the scholar who knows these regions best, attributes to them an average height of five feet four inches.

"But then," said Lady Helena, "what is the truth amidst so many contradictions?"

“The truth, madam,” replied Paganel, “is this: Patagonians have short legs and a broad chest. One can therefore express one’s opinion in a humorous way, by saying that these people have six feet when they are sitting, and only five when they are standing.”

"Bravo! My dear scholar," replied Glenarvan. "That's all that needs to be said."

“Unless,” Paganel continued, “they don’t exist, which would settle everything for everyone. But finally, my friends, I’ll add this comforting remark: the Strait of Magellan is magnificent, even without Patagonians!”

At that moment, the *Duncan* was rounding the Brunswick Peninsula, between two splendid panoramas. Seventy miles after rounding Cape Gregory, it left the Punta Arena penitentiary to starboard. The Chilean flag and the church steeple appeared for a moment between the trees.

Then the strait ran between imposing granite masses; the mountains hid their base within immense forests, and lost their summits, dusted with eternal snow, in the clouds; to the southwest, Mount Tarn rose 6,500 feet into the air; night came, preceded by a long twilight; the light blended imperceptibly into soft hues; the sky became studded with bright stars, and the Southern Cross marked the navigators' course to the South Pole. In the midst of this luminous darkness, by the light of these stars that replace the lighthouses of civilized coasts, the yacht boldly continued its course without dropping anchor in the easy bays with which the shore abounds; often the ends of its yards grazed the branches of the Antarctic beeches that leaned over the waves; Often its propeller also beat the waters of the great rivers, awakening the geese,

the ducks, the snipe, the teal, and all the feathered creatures of the damp surroundings.

Soon ruins appeared, and a few collapses to which the night lent a grandiose aspect, sad remnants of an abandoned colony, whose name will eternally protest against the fertility of these coasts and the richness of these game-filled forests. The *Duncan* was passing Port-Famine.

It was in this very place that the Spaniard Sarmiento, in 1581, came to settle with four hundred emigrants.

He founded the city of Saint-Philippe there; extremely harsh cold decimated the colony, famine finished off those whom the winter had spared, and, in 1587, the privateer Cavendish found the last of these four hundred unfortunates dying of hunger on the ruins of a city six centuries old after six years of existence.

The *Duncan* sailed along these deserted shores; at daybreak, it navigated through narrow channels, between forests of beech, ash, and birch, from which emerged verdant hillocks, knolls carpeted with vigorous holly, and sharp peaks, among which Buckland's obelisk rose to a great height. It passed into the opening of Saint Nicholas Bay, formerly known as French Bay, so named by Bougainville; in the distance, schools of seals and large whales, judging by their spouts, were frolicking, visible from a distance of four miles.

Finally, he rounded Cape Froward, still bristling with the last ice of winter. On the other side of the strait, on Tierra del Fuego, rose six thousand feet high Mount Sarmiento, an enormous aggregation of rocks

separated by bands of clouds, forming in the sky like an aerial archipelago.

It is at Cape Froward that the American continent truly ends, for Cape Horn is only a rock lost at sea below the fifty-sixth degree of latitude.

Once this point is passed, the strait narrows between the Brunswick peninsula and the land of desolation, a long island stretched out between a thousand islets, like a huge cetacean stranded among the pebbles.

What a difference between this jagged tip of America and the sharp, clean points of Africa, Australia, or India! What unknown cataclysm could have so pulverized this immense promontory thrown between two oceans?

Then, the fertile shores gave way to a series of barren, wild-looking coasts, notched by the thousand openings of this inextricable labyrinth.

The *Duncan* , without a mistake, without a hesitation, followed capricious twists and turns, mingling the swirls of its smoke with the mists torn by the rocks. It passed, without slowing its pace, several Spanish trading posts established on these deserted shores. At Cape Tamar, the strait widened; the yacht was able to gain some distance to round the steep coast of the Narborough Islands and drew closer to the southern shores. Finally, thirty-six hours after entering the strait, it saw the rock of Cape Pilares rise on the very tip of the land of desolation. An immense, free, sparkling sea stretched before its prow, and Jacques Paganel, greeting it with an enthusiastic gesture, felt as moved as Ferdinand Magellan himself had been when the *Trinidad* bowed under the breezes of the Pacific Ocean.

## Chapter X *The Thirty-Seventh Parallel*

Eight days after rounding Cape Pilares, the *Duncan* was steaming at full speed into Talcahuano Bay, a magnificent estuary twelve miles long and nine miles wide. The weather was magnificent. The sky in this country is cloudless from November to March, and the south wind prevails invariably along the coasts sheltered by the Andes Mountains. John Mangles, following Edward Glenarvan's orders, had sailed close to the Chiloé Archipelago and the countless remnants of the entire American continent. Some wreck, a broken spar, a piece of wood worked by human hands, could have put the *Duncan* on the trail of the shipwreck; but nothing was seen, and the yacht, continuing on its way, anchored in the port of Talcahuano, forty-two days after leaving the misty waters of the Clyde.

Glenarvan immediately launched his canoe, and, followed by Paganel, landed at the foot of the jetty. The learned geographer, taking advantage of the opportunity, tried to use the Spanish language he had so conscientiously studied; but, to his great surprise, he could not make himself understood by the natives.

"It's the accent I'm missing," he said.

"Let's go to customs," replied Glenarvan.

There, he was informed, through a few words of English accompanied by expressive gestures, that the British consul resided in Concepción. It was an hour's journey. Glenarvan easily found two swift horses, and shortly afterward, he and Paganel passed through the walls of this great city, founded by the enterprising genius of Valdivia, the valiant companion of the Pizarros.

How far it had fallen from its former splendor! Often pillaged by natives, burned in 1819, desolate, ruined, its walls still blackened by the flame of devastation, already eclipsed by Talcahuano, it barely had eight thousand souls.

Under the lazy feet of its inhabitants, its streets were turning into meadows. No commerce, no activity, no business. The mandolin resonated from every balcony; languorous songs escaped through the shutters of the windows, and Concepcion, the ancient city of men, had become a village of women and children.

Glenarvan showed little inclination to investigate the causes of this decline, despite Jacques Paganel's attempts to do so, and without wasting a moment, he went to see J.R. Bentock, Esq., Consul to His Majesty the Queen. This gentleman received him very civilly and, upon learning of Captain Grant's story, undertook to gather information about the entire coastline.

As for the question of whether the three-masted ship *Britannia* had reached the coast near the thirty-seventh parallel along the Chilean or Araucanian shores, it was answered in the negative. No report of such an event had reached either the consul or his colleagues from other nations.

Glenarvan did not give up. He returned to Talcahuano, and sparing no effort, care, or money, he dispatched agents to the coasts.

The search was fruitless. The most meticulous inquiries among the local populations yielded no results. It had to be concluded that the *Britannia* had left no trace of its shipwreck.

Glenarvan then informed his companions of the failure of his efforts. Mary Grant and her brother could not contain their grief. This was six days after the *Duncan 's arrival* in Talcahuano. The passengers were gathered in the quarterdeck.

Lady Helena comforted the captain's two children, not with words—what could she have said?—but with her caresses. Jacques Paganel had taken up the document again and was examining it with profound attention, as if he wanted to wrest new secrets from it. He had been studying it thus for an hour when Glenarvan called out to him and said:

"Paganel! I defer to your sagacity. Is our interpretation of this document erroneous? Is the meaning of these words illogical?"

Paganel did not reply. He was thinking.

"Are we mistaken about the presumed location of the disaster?" Glenarvan continued. "Doesn't the name *Patagonia* immediately strike even the least perceptive person?"

Paganel remained silent.

"Finally," said Glenarvan, "doesn't the *Indian word* prove us right again?"

"Perfectly," replied Mac Nabbs.

—And, therefore, is it not obvious that the shipwrecked men, at the time they were writing these lines, expected to become prisoners of the Indians?

"I will stop you there, my dear lord," replied Paganel at last, "and if your other conclusions are correct, the last one, at least, does not seem

rational to me."

"What do you mean?" asked Lady Helena, as all eyes turned to the geographer.

"I mean," replied Paganel, emphasizing his words, "that Captain Grant *is now a prisoner of the Indians* , and I will add that the document leaves no doubt about this situation."

"Explain yourself, sir," said Miss Grant.

—Nothing could be easier, my dear Mary; instead of reading on the document *will be prisoners* , let us read *are prisoners* , and everything becomes clear.

"But that is impossible!" replied Glenarvan.

"Impossible! And why is that, my noble friend?" asked Paganel, smiling.

—Because the bottle could only have been thrown at the moment the ship broke up on the rocks. Hence the consequence that the degrees of longitude and latitude apply to the very place of the shipwreck.

"There is no proof of that," replied Paganel sharply, "and I do not see why the shipwrecked men, after being dragged by the Indians into the interior of the continent, would not have sought to make known, by means of this bottle, the place of their captivity."

—Quite simply, my dear Paganel, because, to throw a bottle into the sea, the sea must at least be there.

"Or, failing the sea," replied Paganel, "the rivers that flow into it!"

A stunned silence greeted this unexpected, yet plausible, response. From the flash of light in his listeners' eyes, Paganel understood that each of them was clinging to a new hope. Lady Helena was the first to speak again.

"What an idea!" she exclaimed.

"And what a good idea," added the geographer naively.

"So, what's your opinion?" Glenarvan asked.

—My advice is to look for the thirty-seventh parallel where it meets the American coast and follow it without deviating by even half a degree until it plunges into the Atlantic. Perhaps we will find the survivors of the *Britannia along its course* .

"Slim chance!" replied the major.

“However faint it may be,” Paganel continued, “we must not neglect it. Even if I am right, by chance, that this bottle reached the sea by following the current of a river on this continent, we cannot fail, therefore, to stumble upon the prisoners’ trail. Look, my friends, look at the map of this country, and I will convince you beyond a shadow of a doubt!”

With that, Paganel spread out a map of Chile and the Argentine provinces on the table.

“Look,” he said, “and follow me on this journey across the American continent. Let us cross the narrow Chilean strip. Let us traverse the Andes Mountains. Let us descend into the heart of the pampas. Are rivers, streams, and waterways lacking in these regions? No. Here is the

Rio Negro, here is the Rio Colorado, here are their tributaries, cut off by the thirty-seventh degree of latitude, all of which could have served to transport the document. There, perhaps, among a tribe, in the hands of settled Indians, on the banks of these little-known rivers, in the gorges of the sierras, those whom I have the right to call our friends await a providential intervention! Must we then betray their hopes?" "Is it not your opinion to follow through these lands the rigorous line that my finger is currently tracing on the map, and if, against all expectations, I am mistaken again, is it not our duty to go all the way up the thirty-seventh parallel, and, if necessary, to find the shipwrecked, to circumnavigate the globe with it?"

These words, spoken with great enthusiasm, produced a profound emotion among Paganel's listeners. They all rose and came to shake his hand.

"Yes! My father is here!" cried Robert Grant, devouring the map with his eyes.

“And wherever he is,” replied Glenarvan, “we shall find him, my child! Nothing is more logical than our friend Paganel’s interpretation, and we must, without hesitation, follow the path he has laid out for us. Either the captain is in the hands of a large Indian force, or he is a prisoner of a small tribe. In the latter case, we will free him. In the former, after assessing his situation, we will join the *Duncan* on the east coast, sail to Buenos Aires, and there, a detachment organized by Major Mac Nabbs will subdue all the Indians in the Argentine provinces.”

—Good! Good! Your Honor! replied John Mangles, and I will add that this crossing of the American continent will be without perils.

“Without peril or fatigue,” Paganel continued. “How many have already accomplished it who scarcely had our means of execution, and whose courage was not sustained by the grandeur of the undertaking! Did not a certain Basilio Villarmo travel from Carmen to the Andes in 1872? Did not a Chilean, the mayor of the province of Concepción, Don Luiz de la Cruz, set out from Antuco in 1806, precisely follow this thirty-seventh degree of latitude, and, crossing the Andes, did he not arrive in Buenos Aires after a journey completed in forty days? Finally, did not Colonel García, Alcide d’Orbigny, and my honorable colleague, Dr. Martin de Moussy, traverse this country in every direction, and do for science what we are about to do for humanity?”

"Sir! Sir," said Mary Grant, her voice breaking with emotion, "how can one recognize a devotion that exposes you to so many dangers?"

"Danger!" cried Paganel. "Who said the word *'danger* '?"

"It wasn't me!" replied Robert Grant, his eyes shining, his gaze resolute.

"Dangers!" Paganel resumed. "Do such things exist? Besides, what is it? A journey of barely three hundred and fifty leagues, since we will be traveling in a straight line, a journey that will take place at a latitude equivalent to that of Spain, Sicily, and Greece in the other hemisphere, and consequently under a roughly identical climate, a journey, finally, whose duration will be a month at most! It's a walk in the park!"

"Mr. Paganel," Lady Helena then asked, "so you think that if the shipwrecked people fell into the hands of the Indians, their existence was respected?"

“Yes, I do, madam! But the Indians are not cannibals! Far from it. One of my compatriots, whom I knew from the Geographical Society, Mr. Guinnard, was held captive by the Pampas Indians for three years. He suffered, he was badly mistreated, but in the end, he emerged victorious from this ordeal. A European is a useful being in these lands; the Indians know his value, and they care for him like a prized animal.”

"Well, there's no more room for hesitation," said Glenarvan, "we must leave, and leave without delay. Which route should we take?"

"An easy and pleasant route," replied Paganel. "A bit of mountains at the beginning, then a gentle slope on the eastern side of the Andes, and finally a flat, grassy, sandy plain, a real garden."

"Let's look at the map," said the major.

“Here it is, my dear Mac Nabbs. We will go to the end of the thirty-seventh parallel on the Chilean coast, between Punta Rumena and Carnero Bay. After crossing the capital of Araucanía, we will cut through the Andes via the Antuco Pass, leaving the volcano to the south; then, gliding down the long slopes of the mountains, crossing the Neuquem River and the Rio Colorado, we will reach the pampas, the Salinas, the Guamini River, and the Sierra Tapalquen. There lie the borders of the province of Buenos Aires. We will cross them, climb the Sierra Tandil, and continue our search as far as Punta Medano on the shores of the Atlantic.”

As he spoke, as he outlined the expedition's program, Paganel didn't even bother to look at the map spread out before him; he simply didn't care. Nourished by the works of Frézier, Molina, Humboldt, Miers, and

D'Orbigny, his memory could neither be deceived nor surprised. After completing this geographical inventory, he added:

"So, my dear friends, the route is straight. In thirty days we will have crossed it, and we will have arrived before the *Duncan* on the eastern coast, provided that the downstream winds delay its progress.

—So the *Duncan* , said John Mangles, will have to sail between Cape Corrientes and Cape Saint-Antoine?

-Precisely.

"And how would you compose the personnel of such an expedition?" asked Glenarvan.

—As simply as possible. It's only a matter of acknowledging Captain Grant's situation, not of engaging in gunfire with the Indians. I believe that Lord Glenarvan, our natural leader; the major, who will not yield his position to anyone; your humble servant, Jacques Paganel…

"And me!" cried young Grant.

—Robert! Robert! said Mary.

“And why not?” replied Paganel. “Travel broadens the mind. So, the four of us, and three sailors from the *Duncan* …”

"What," said John Mangles, addressing his master, "does not your honor plead for me?"

"My dear John," replied Glenarvan, "we are leaving our passengers on board, that is to say, what we hold most dear in the world! Who would watch over them, if not the devoted captain of the *Duncan* ?"

"So we cannot accompany you?" said Lady Helena, whose eyes clouded with sadness.

“My dear Helena,” replied Glenarvan, “our journey must be accomplished with exceptional speed; our separation will be short, and…”

"Yes, my friend, I understand you," replied Lady Helena; "go then, and succeed in your undertaking!"

—Besides, it's not a journey, said Paganel.

"And what is it?" asked Lady Helena.

"A passing through, nothing more. We will pass through, that's all, like an honest man on earth, doing as much good as possible. ' *Transire benefaciendo* ,' that is our motto."

With that statement from Paganel, the discussion ended—if one can call it that—a conversation in which everyone agreed. Preparations began that very day. It was resolved to keep the expedition secret, so as not to alert the Indians.

The departure was set for October 14th. When it came to choosing the sailors to disembark, they all offered their services, and Glenarvan had a wealth of options. He therefore preferred to leave it to chance, so as not to offend such good people.

This is what happened, and the second, Tom Austin, Wilson, a vigorous fellow, and Mulrady, who would have challenged Tom Sayers himself to a boxing match, had no reason to complain about luck.

Glenarvan had been extremely active in his preparations. He wanted to be ready on the appointed day, and he was. Meanwhile, John Mangles was stocking up on coal so that he could put to sea immediately. He was determined to reach the Argentine coast before the other travelers. From this arose a genuine rivalry between Glenarvan and the young captain, which ultimately worked to everyone's advantage.

Indeed, on October 14th, at the appointed time, everyone was ready. At the moment of departure, the yacht's passengers gathered in the saloon. The *Duncan* was ready to set sail, and the blades of its propeller were already disturbing the clear waters of Talcahuano.

Glenarvan, Paganel, Mac Nabbs, Robert Grant, Tom Austin, Wilson, and Mulrady, armed with rifles and Colt revolvers, prepared to leave the shore. Guides and mules awaited them at the end of the jetty.

"It is time," Lord Edward finally said.

"Go on, my friend!" replied Lady Helena, containing her emotion.

Lord Glenarvan pressed her to his heart, while Robert threw himself into Mary Grant's arms.

"And now, dear companions," said Jacques Paganel, "one last handshake that will last us all the way to the shores of the Atlantic!"

That was asking a lot. However, there were embraces there capable of fulfilling the wishes of the worthy scholar.

They went back up on deck, and the seven travelers left the *Duncan* . Soon they reached the quay, which the yacht, as it maneuvered, approached to within less than half a cable's length.

Lady Helena, from the top of the quarterdeck, cried out one last time:

"My friends, God help you!"

"And he will help us, madam," replied Jacques Paganel, "for I beg you to believe it, we will help ourselves!"

"Forward!" John Mangles shouted to his mechanic.

"Let's go!" replied Lord Glenarvan.

And at the very moment when the travelers, giving free rein to their mounts, followed the path to the shore, the *Duncan* , under the action of its propeller, resumed at full steam the route to the ocean.

## Chapter XI *Crossing Chile*

The native troop organized by Glenarvan consisted of three men and a child. The head muleteer was an Englishman who had been naturalized in the country for twenty years. He made a living hiring mules to travelers and guiding them through the various mountain passes.

Then, he would hand them over to a "baqueano," an Argentinian guide familiar with the pampas. This Englishman hadn't so completely forgotten his native tongue in the company of mules and Indians that he couldn't converse with the travelers. This allowed Glenarvan to easily express his wishes and carry out his orders, a situation Glenarvan was quick to exploit, since Jacques Paganel was still unable to make himself understood.

This head muleteer, this "catapaz," as they were called in Chile, was assisted by two native peons and a twelve-year-old boy. The peons watched over the mules carrying the troop's baggage, and the boy led the "madrina," a small mare adorned with bells and a trumpet, which walked ahead, drawing ten mules in its wake. The travelers rode seven of them, the catapaz one; the other two carried provisions and a few rolls of cloth intended to secure the favor of the local chieftains. The peons walked, as was their custom. This crossing of South America was therefore expected to be carried out under the best possible conditions, in terms of both safety and speed.

Crossing the Andes is no ordinary journey. It cannot be undertaken without the use of those sturdy mules, the most prized of which come from Argentina. These excellent animals have developed in the country beyond that of the original breed. They are not fussy eaters. They drink only once a day, easily cover ten leagues in eight hours, and carry a load of fourteen arrobas without complaint.

There are no inns on this ocean-to-ocean route. The food is dried meat, rice seasoned with chili peppers, and game that deigns to be killed along the way. Water is drunk from mountain streams and from brooks in the plains, seasoned with a few drops of rum, each person carrying their own supply in a cow horn called a "chiffle." One must be careful, however, not to overindulge in alcoholic beverages, which are not beneficial in a region where the human nervous system is particularly heightened. As for bedding, it is entirely contained within the native saddle called a "recado." This saddle is made of "pelions," sheepskins tanned on one side and lined with wool on the other, held together by wide, luxuriously embroidered straps. A traveler wrapped

in these warm blankets braves the damp nights with impunity and sleeps soundly.

Glenarvan, a man who knew how to travel and adapt to the customs of different countries, had adopted Chilean dress for himself and his family. Paganel and Robert, two children—one tall and one short—were overjoyed when they put their heads through the national poncho, a large tartan with a hole in the center, and their legs into leather boots made from the hind leg of a young horse. You should have seen their richly harnessed mule, with its rough-hewn bit in its mouth, the long braided leather bridle serving as a whip, the headstall adorned with metal ornaments, and the "alforjas," double bags of brightly colored canvas that held the day's provisions.

Paganel, ever distracted, nearly received three or four kicks from his excellent mount as he mounted. Once in the saddle, his inseparable spyglass slung over his shoulder, his feet firmly planted in the stirrups, he trusted in his horse's wisdom and had no reason to regret it.

As for young Robert, he showed remarkable promise from his early days to become an excellent horseman.

We set off. The weather was superb, the sky perfectly clear, and the air sufficiently cooled by the sea breezes, despite the heat of the sun. The small group followed the winding shores of Talcahuano Bay at a brisk pace, aiming to reach the end of the parallel thirty miles south. We walked quickly that first day through the reeds of ancient, drained marshes, but spoke little. The farewells of departure had left a vivid impression on the travelers. They could still see the smoke of the *Duncan* disappearing over the horizon.

Everyone was silent, except for Paganel; this studious geographer was asking himself questions in Spanish, and answering himself in this new language.

Moreover, the catapaz was a rather taciturn man, and his profession probably hadn't made him talkative. He hardly spoke to his peons.

These men, being professionals, knew their job very well. If a mule stopped, they would urge it on with a guttural cry; if the cry wasn't enough, a good stone, thrown with a sure hand, would overcome its stubbornness. Should a strap come undone or a bridle slip, the assistant, removing his poncho, would wrap it around the mule's head, and the problem, repaired, would immediately resume its walk.

The muleteers usually leave at eight o'clock, after the morning breakfast, and continue until bedtime, at four o'clock in the evening.

Glenarvan adhered to this practice. Now, precisely when the catapaz signaled them to halt, the travelers were arriving at the town of Arauco, located at the southern end of the bay, without having left the foaming edge of the ocean. They would then have had to walk some twenty miles west to Carnero Bay to find the tip of the thirty-seventh degree. But Glenarvan's agents had already explored this part of the coastline without finding any trace of the shipwreck. A further exploration was therefore unnecessary, and it was decided that the town of Arauco would be taken as the starting point. From there, the route was to be followed eastward, along a perfectly straight line.

The small group entered the town to spend the night, and camped in the courtyard of an inn whose comfort was still in a rudimentary state.

Arauco is the capital of Araucanía, a state one hundred and fifty leagues long and thirty leagues wide, inhabited by the Molouche, the eldest sons of the Chilean race celebrated by the poet Ercilla. A proud and strong race, the only one in the Americas that has never suffered foreign domination. If Arauco once belonged to the Spanish, the people, at least, did not submit; they resisted then as they resist today the encroaching ventures of Chile, and their independent flag—a white star on a blue field—still flies atop the fortified hill that protects the city.

While supper was being prepared, Glenarvan, Paganel, and the catapaz strolled among the thatched houses. Apart from a church and the remains of a Franciscan monastery, Arauco offered nothing of interest. Glenarvan tried to gather some information, but to no avail. Paganel despaired of being able to make himself understood by the inhabitants; but, since they spoke Araucanian—a mother tongue whose use is widespread as far as the Strait of Magellan—Paganel's Spanish was as useful to him as Hebrew. He thus occupied his eyes, if not his ears, and, all in all, he experienced a true scholarly joy in observing the various types of the Molouche race posing before him. The men were tall, with flat faces, coppery complexions, shaved chins, wary eyes, and broad heads lost in long black hair. They seemed destined for that special idleness of war men who don't know what to do in peacetime. Their wives, miserable and courageous, employed themselves in the arduous tasks of the household, groomed the horses, cleaned the weapons, plowed, hunted for their masters, and still found the time to make those blue-turquoise *ponchos* which require two years of work, and whose lowest price reaches one hundred dollars.

In short, these Molouches are an uninteresting people with rather savage customs. They possess almost every human vice, with only one virtue: a love of independence.

"True Spartans," Paganel repeated, when, his walk over, he came to take his place at the evening meal.

The worthy scholar was exaggerating, and he was understood even less when he added that his French heart was beating strongly during his visit to the city of Arauco.

When the major asked him the reason for this unexpected "beating," he replied that his emotion was quite natural, since one of his compatriots had once occupied the throne of Araucania. The major asked him to reveal the name of this sovereign. Jacques Paganel proudly named the brave Monsieur de Tonneins, an excellent man, a former lawyer from Périgueux, a bit too bearded, and who had suffered what dethroned kings readily call "the ingratitude of their subjects." The major, having smiled slightly at the idea of a former lawyer driven from the throne, Paganel replied quite seriously that it was perhaps easier for a lawyer to make a good king than for a king to make a good lawyer. And with this remark, everyone laughed and drank a few drops of "chicha" to the health of Orellie-Antoine I, former king of Araucania. A few minutes later, the travelers, wrapped in their ponchos, were fast asleep. The next day, at eight o'clock, with the madrina in the lead and the peons at the rear, the small group set off again eastward along the thirty-seventh parallel. They were then crossing the fertile territory of Araucanía, rich in vineyards and herds of livestock. But, little by little, solitude crept in.

Barely a mile apart, a hut belonging to the "ras-treadores," Indian horse tamers famous throughout the Americas. Sometimes, an abandoned post house, which served as shelter for the wandering natives of the plains. Two rivers that day blocked the travelers' path: the Rio de Raque and the Rio de Tubal. But the catapaz discovered a ford that allowed them to cross. The Andes mountain range unfurled on the horizon, swelling its rumps and multiplying its peaks toward the north. These were still only the lower vertebrae of the enormous spine upon which the framework of the New World rests.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, after a journey of thirty-five miles, they stopped in the open countryside beneath a clump of giant myrtles. The mules were unbridled and allowed to graze freely on the thick grass of the meadow. The alforjas provided the usual meat and rice. The pelions spread on the ground served as blankets and pillows, and everyone found restful sleep on these makeshift beds, while the peons and the catapaz took turns keeping watch.

Since the weather was becoming so favorable, since all the travelers, without exception, were in good health, and since this journey was beginning under such auspicious circumstances, they had to take advantage of it and push forward like a gambler "hits the jackpot." That was everyone's opinion. The following day, they marched briskly, crossed Bell Rapids without incident, and that evening, camping on the banks of the Rio Biobío, which separates Spanish Chile from independent Chile, Glenarvan was able to add another thirty-five miles to the expedition's tally. The country hadn't changed. It was still fertile and rich in amaryllis, tree violets, *fluschia* , daturas, and golden-flowered cacti. A few animals lay hidden in the thickets. But few natives

were seen. Just a few "guassos," degenerate children of Indians and Spaniards, galloped on horses bloodied by the gigantic spurs that adorned their bare hooves, passing like shadows. There was no one to talk to along the road, and information was utterly lacking; Glenarvan resigned himself to this. He reasoned that Captain Grant, a prisoner of the Indians, must have been lured by them beyond the Andes. The search could only be fruitful in the pampas, not this side of them. So, they had to be patient, press on, quickly and relentlessly.

On the 17th, we set off again at the usual time and in the customary order. An order that Robert did not maintain without difficulty, for his ardor led him to get ahead of the madam, much to the despair of his mule.

It took nothing less than a stern reminder from Glenarvan to keep the young boy at his marching post.

The country then became more rugged; a few rises in the terrain indicated the approaching mountains; the *rivers* multiplied, noisily obeying the whims of the slopes. Paganel often consulted his maps; when one of these streams was not marked on them, which happened frequently, his geographer's blood boiled in his veins, and he became angry in the most charming way imaginable.

"A stream without a name," he said, "is as if it had no civil status! It does not exist in the eyes of geographical law."

He also did not hesitate to name these unnamed *rivers* ; he noted them on his map and bestowed upon them the most resounding epithets of the Spanish language.

"What a language!" he repeated, "what a full and sonorous language! It is a language of metal, and I am sure that it is composed of seventy-eight parts of copper and twenty-two of tin, like the bronze of bells!"

"But at least you're making progress?" Glenarvan replied.

"Indeed! My dear lord! Ah! If it weren't for the accent! But there is the accent!"

And while waiting for something better, Paganel, along the way, worked on breaking in his throat to overcome the difficulties of pronunciation, not forgetting his geographical observations. There, for example, he was surprisingly good and would have had no equal. When Glenarvan questioned the guide about a peculiarity of the country, his learned companion always anticipated the guide's answer. The guide would look at him with an astonished expression.

That same day, around ten o'clock, a road appeared which intersected the line followed until then.

Glenarvan naturally asked for the name, and naturally, it was Jacques Paganel who answered:

"This is the road from Yumbel to Los Angeles."

Glenarvan looked at the catapaz.

"Perfectly," he replied.

Then, addressing the geographer:

"So you traveled through this country?" he said.

"Good heavens!" replied Paganel seriously.

—On a mule?

"No, in an armchair."

The catapaz did not understand, for he shrugged his shoulders and returned to the head of the troop. At five o'clock in the evening, he stopped in a shallow gorge, a few miles above the small town of Loja; and that night, the travelers camped at the foot of the sierras, the first echelons of the great cordillera.

## Chapter XII *At Twelve Thousand Feet in the Air*

The crossing of Chile had so far presented no serious incidents. But now, these obstacles and dangers inherent in a mountain passage presented themselves all at once. The struggle with natural difficulties was about to truly begin.

An important question had to be resolved before departure. By what route could they cross the Andes mountain range without deviating from the planned route? The catapaz was consulted on this matter:

"I only know of two passable routes in this part of the mountain range," he replied.

—The Arica passage, no doubt, said Paganel, which was discovered by Valdivia Mendoza?

-Precisely.

—And what about Villarica, located south of the Nevado of that name?

-Just.

—Well, my friend, these two passages have only one fault, that is to lead us north or south more than is appropriate.

—Do you have another paso to suggest? asked the major.

“Perfectly,” replied Paganel, “the Antuco pass, situated on the volcanic slope, at thirty-seven degrees thirty minutes, that is to say, half a degree from our route. It is only a thousand fathoms above sea level and was discovered by Zamudio De Cruz.”

—Well, said Glenarvan, but this Paso d'Antuco, do you know it, catapaz?

—Yes, *my lord* , I crossed it, and if I did not suggest it, it is because it is at most a cattle track used by the pastoral Indians of the eastern slopes.

—Well, my friend, replied Glenarvan, where the herds of mares, sheep and oxen, the *pehuenches , pass* , we shall know how to pass too.

And since it keeps us on the straight path, let's go for the Antuco pass.

The signal to depart was given immediately, and we plunged into the Las Lejas valley, between great masses of crystallized limestone. We climbed along an almost imperceptible slope. Around eleven o'clock, we had to skirt the shores of a small lake, a natural reservoir and picturesque meeting place for all the nearby *rivers* ; they arrived there murmuring and merged in limpid tranquility. Above the lake stretched

vast "llanos," high plains covered with grasses, where Indian herds grazed.

Then, we encountered a marsh that ran from south to north, and from which we escaped, thanks to the mules' instincts. At one o'clock, Fort Ballenare appeared on a sheer rock, crowned by its dismantled curtain walls. We passed beyond it. The slopes were already becoming steep and stony, and the pebbles, dislodged by the mules' hooves, rolled beneath their feet, forming noisy cascades of stones. Around three o'clock, we came upon more picturesque ruins of a fort destroyed in the uprising of 1770.

“Clearly,” said Paganel, “mountains are not enough to separate men; they must also be fortified!”

From this point on, the road became difficult, even perilous; the angle of the slopes opened up more, the ledges narrowed more and more, the precipices deepened terrifyingly.

The mules advanced cautiously, noses to the ground, sniffing the path. They walked in single file. Sometimes, at a sharp bend, the madrina disappeared, and the small caravan was then guided by the distant sound of her bell. Often, too, the capricious twists and turns of the path brought the column back into two parallel lines, and the catapaz could speak to the peons, while a crevasse, barely two fathoms wide but two hundred deep, carved an impassable abyss between them.

The herbaceous vegetation was still struggling against the encroaching stone, but one could already sense the mineral kingdom grappling with the plant kingdom. The approaches to the Antuco volcano were recognizable by a few streaks of ferruginous lava bristling

with needle-like yellow crystals. The rocks, piled one on top of the other and ready to tumble, defied all laws of equilibrium. Clearly, cataclysms would easily alter their appearance, and, considering these unstable peaks, these awkward domes, these precariously positioned hillocks, it was easy to see that the time for final settling had not yet come for this mountainous region.

Under these conditions, the route must have been difficult to discern. The almost constant shifting of the Andean mountain range often alters its course, and landmarks are no longer in their original positions. Thus, the catapaz hesitated; he stopped; he looked around; he studied the shapes of the rocks; he searched the crumbling stone for traces of indigenous people. All orientation became impossible.

Glenarvan followed his guide step by step; he understood, he felt his growing embarrassment with the difficulties of the path; he did not dare to question him and thought, not without reason perhaps, that muleteers are like mules with instinct and that it is better to rely on him.

For another hour, the catapaz wandered, as it were, aimlessly, but always gaining higher ground on the mountain. Finally, it was forced to stop abruptly. They found themselves at the bottom of a narrow valley, one of those narrow gorges the Indians call "quebradas." A sheer wall of porphyry blocked its exit. After searching in vain for a passage, the catapaz dismounted, folded its arms, and waited. Glenarvan came to it.

"Have you lost your way?" he asked.

—No, *my lord* , replied the catapaz.

—However, we are not in the Antuco passage?

—We're here.

—You're not mistaken?

—I'm not mistaken. These are the remains of a fire that was used by the Indians, and these are the tracks left by herds of mares and sheep.

—Well, we went through that road!

—Yes, but we won't be able to use it anymore. The last earthquake made it impassable…

"To the mules," replied the major, "but not to the men."

"Ah! That concerns you," replied the catapaz, "I did what I could. My mules and I are ready to turn back, please retrace your steps and look for other passes through the mountain range."

—And that will be a delay?…

"At least three days."

Glenarvan listened silently to the catapaz's words. The catapaz was clearly on the terms of his bargain. His mules could go no further. However, when the proposal was made to turn back, Glenarvan turned to his companions and said:

"Do you still want to go through?"

"We want to follow you," replied Tom Austin.

“And even go before you,” added Paganel. “What’s the point, after all? Crossing a mountain range, whose opposite slopes offer an incomparably easier descent! Once that’s done, we’ll find the Argentine *baqueanos* who will guide us across the pampas, and swift horses accustomed to galloping across the plains. Onward then, and without hesitation.”

"Forward!" cried Glenarvan's companions.

"Aren't you coming with us?" he asked the catapaz.

"I am a mule driver," replied the muleteer.

—At your leisure.

“We’ll do without him,” said Paganel; “on the other side of this wall, we’ll find the paths to Antuco, and I’m confident I can lead you down the mountain as directly as the best guide in the Andes.”

Glenarvan settled with the catapaz and dismissed him, his peons, and his mules. The weapons, tools, and some provisions were divided among the seven travelers. By mutual agreement, it was decided that the ascent would resume immediately, and that, if necessary, they would travel through part of the night. A steep path wound up the left bank, a path that mules could not have traversed.

The difficulties were great, but, after two hours of fatigue and detours, Glenarvan and his companions found themselves on the Antuco pass.

They were then in the Andean region proper, which is not far from the upper ridge of the Cordillera; but there was no longer any sign of a

well-trodden path or a definite pass. This entire region had just been shaken by the recent earthquakes, and it was necessary to climb ever higher up the mountain range. Paganel was quite disconcerted not to find the route clear, and he expected great hardship to reach the summit of the Andes, for their average height is between eleven thousand and twelve thousand six hundred feet. Fortunately, the weather was calm, the sky clear, and the season favorable; but in winter, from May to October, such an ascent would have been impossible. The intense cold quickly kills travelers, and those who are spared do not escape, at least, the violence of the "temporales," a type of hurricane specific to these regions, which, every year, fills the chasms of the Cordillera with corpses.

They climbed all night long; they hauled themselves up almost inaccessible plateaus by sheer force of will; they leaped across wide, deep crevasses; arms added to arms replaced ropes, and shoulders served as rungs; these intrepid men resembled a troupe of clowns given over to all the madness of the Icarian Games. It was then that Mulrady's strength and Wilson's skill had a thousand opportunities to be tested. These two brave Scotsmen multiplied; many times, without their devotion and courage, the small band would not have been able to pass.

Glenarvan kept a close eye on young Robert, whose age and vivacity led him to be imprudent. Paganel, for his part, advanced with a typically French fury. As for the major, he moved only as much as necessary, no more, no less, and rose with an imperceptible movement.

Did he realize he had been climbing for several hours? It's not certain. Perhaps he imagined he was going down.

At five o'clock in the morning, the travelers had reached an altitude of 7,500 feet, determined by barometric observation. They were now on the secondary plateaus, the outermost edge of the wooded region. There, several animals bounded about that would have been the joy or fortune of a hunter; these agile beasts knew this well, for they fled from the approach of men, and from afar. There was the llama, a precious mountain animal, which replaces the sheep, the ox, and the horse, and lives where the mule cannot. There was the chinchilla, a small, gentle, and timid rodent, rich in fur, which is somewhere between a hare and a jerboa, and whose hind legs give it the appearance of a kangaroo. Nothing is more charming to see than this light animal running along the treetops like a squirrel.

"It's not yet a bird," said Paganel, "but it's no longer a quadruped."

However, these animals were not the last inhabitants of the mountain. At nine thousand feet, on the edge of the permanent snow line, lived in herds ruminants of incomparable beauty: the alpaca with its long, silky coat, and that elegant, proud, hornless goat-like creature with fine wool, which naturalists have named the vicuña. But one mustn't even think of approaching it, and it was scarcely possible to see it; it would flee, one might say, at full speed, gliding silently across the dazzling white carpets of snow.

By this time, the landscape had been completely transformed. Great, gleaming blocks of ice, bluish in some of the steep slopes, rose up on all sides, reflecting the first rays of dawn. The ascent became extremely perilous. No one ventured forth without carefully probing for crevasses. Wilson had taken the lead, testing the glaciers with his feet. His companions walked precisely in his footsteps and avoided raising their

voices, for the slightest noise disturbing the air could cause the masses of snow hanging seven or eight hundred feet above their heads to collapse.

They had then reached the region of shrubs, which, two hundred and fifty fathoms higher, gave way to grasses and cacti. At eleven thousand feet, these plants themselves abandoned the arid soil, and all trace of vegetation disappeared. The travelers had stopped only once, at eight o'clock, to restore their strength with a simple meal, and, with superhuman courage, they resumed their ascent, braving ever-increasing dangers. They had to straddle sharp ridges and pass over chasms that no eye dared plumb. In many places, wooden crosses marked the route and the sites of numerous catastrophes. Around two o'clock, an immense plateau, devoid of any vegetation, a kind of desert, stretched out between gaunt peaks. The air was dry, the sky a stark blue; At this altitude, rain is unknown, and vapors only resolve into snow or hail. Here and there, a few peaks of porphyry or basalt pierced the white shroud like the bones of a skeleton, and, at times, fragments of quartz or gneiss, dislodged by the action of the air, tumbled down with a dull noise, which a low-density atmosphere rendered almost imperceptible.

However, the small group, despite their courage, was exhausted. Glenarvan, seeing his companions' weariness, regretted having ventured so far into the mountains. Young Robert stiffened against his fatigue, but he could go no further. At three o'clock, Glenarvan stopped.

"You need to rest," he said, "because he knew that no one would make that offer."

"Take a rest?" replied Paganel, "but we have no shelter."

—However, it is essential, if only for Robert.

"No, *my lord* ," replied the brave child, "I can still walk... Don't stop..."

“We’ll carry you, my boy,” replied Paganel, “but we must reach the eastern slope at all costs. There we might find some shelter. I ask for another two hours’ walk.”

"Is that your opinion, all of you?" asked Glenarvan.

"Yes," replied his companions.

Mulrady added:

"I'll take care of the child."

And so we resumed our eastward journey. It was another two hours of a terrifying climb. We continued ascending to reach the final peaks of the mountain.

The thin air produced that painful oppression known as "puna." Blood seeped through gums and lips due to loss of balance, and perhaps also under the influence of the snow, which at great altitudes obviously pollutes the atmosphere. It was necessary to compensate for the lack of density with frequent breaths, thus stimulating circulation, which was no less tiring than the sun's rays reflecting off the snowdrifts. Whatever the will of these courageous men, the moment came when even the bravest faltered, and vertigo, that terrible mountain sickness, destroyed not only their physical strength but also their morale. One does not fight against such fatigue with impunity. Soon falls became frequent, and those who fell could only advance by crawling on their knees.

But exhaustion was about to put an end to this overly prolonged ascent, and Glenarvan did not regard without terror the immensity of the snows, the cold with which they permeated this ominous region, the shadow that rose towards these desolate peaks, the lack of shelter for the night, when the major stopped him, and in a calm tone:

"A hut," he said.

## Chapter XIII *Descent of the Andes*

Anyone other than Mac Nabbs would have passed by, around, even above this hut a hundred times without suspecting its existence. A mound of snow barely distinguished it from the surrounding rocks. It had to be cleared. After half an hour of determined work, Wilson and Mulrady had cleared the entrance to the " *casucha* ." And the small group huddled inside eagerly.

This *casucha* , built by the Indians, was made of adobe, a type of sun-baked brick; it was shaped like a cube, twelve feet on each side, and stood atop a block of basalt. A stone staircase led to the door, the only opening in the hut, and, however narrow it was, hurricanes, snow, or hail knew how to force their way through when the temporal winds unleashed them in the mountains.

Ten people could easily fit inside, and if its walls hadn't been sufficiently watertight during the rainy season, at least at that time they offered some protection against the intense cold that the thermometer recorded at ten degrees below zero. Moreover, a sort of hearth with a poorly mortared brick chimney allowed for lighting a fire and effectively combating the outside temperature.

"This is a sufficient lodging," said Glenarvan, "if not comfortable. Providence has led us here, and we can do no less than thank it."

"What," replied Paganel, "but it's a palace! It only lacks guards and courtiers. We will be admirably well-off here."

"Especially when a good fire blazes in the hearth," said Tom Austin, "for if we are hungry we are no less cold, it seems to me, and, for my part, a good bundle of sticks would delight me more than a slice of venison."

"Well, Tom," replied Paganel, "we'll try to find some fuel."

"Fuel at the top of the mountain ranges!" said Mulrady, shaking his head doubtfully.

"Since we made a chimney in this *casucha* ," replied the major, "it's probably because we found something to burn here."

"Our friend Mac Nabbs is right," said Glenarvan; "set everything up for supper; I'm going to go and do the lumberjack's job."

"I'll accompany you with Wilson," replied Paganel.

"If you need me?" said Robert, standing up.

“No, rest, my good boy,” replied Glenarvan. “You will be a man at an age when others are still just children!”

Glenarvan, Paganel, and Wilson left the *casucha* . It was six o'clock in the evening. The cold stung sharply despite the absolute calm of the atmosphere. The blue of the sky was already darkening, and the sun's last rays grazed the high peaks of the Andean plateaus. Paganel, having

taken his barometer with him, consulted it and saw that the mercury remained at 0.495 millimeters. The depression of the barometric column corresponded to an elevation of eleven thousand seven hundred feet. This region of the Andes was therefore only nine hundred and ten meters lower in altitude than Mont Blanc. If these mountains had presented the difficulties that bristle against the Swiss giant, if only hurricanes and whirlpools had been unleashed against them, not one of the travelers would have crossed the great chain of the New World.

Glenarvan and Paganel, having reached a porphyry mound, surveyed the horizon in every direction. They now occupied the summit of the Andean *nevados* , overlooking an area of forty square miles. To the east, the slopes descended in gentle ramps, allowing passage for the peons to glide for several hundred fathoms. In the distance, longitudinal streaks of stone and erratic boulders, pushed back by glacial movement, formed immense moraine lines. Already the Colorado Valley was sinking into a rising shadow, cast by the setting sun; the contours of the land—the projections, the spires, the peaks—illuminated by its rays, were gradually fading, and the darkening was slowly spreading across the entire eastern slope of the Andes. In the west, the light still illuminated the buttresses that support the sheer wall of the western flanks.

It was dazzling to see the rocks and glaciers bathed in the radiance of the sun. To the north, a succession of peaks undulated, blending imperceptibly and forming a line that seemed to tremble beneath an unskillful pencil. The eye was lost in confusion. But to the south, on the contrary, the spectacle became splendid, and, with nightfall, it would take on sublime proportions. Indeed, the gaze, plunging into the wild

valley of Torbido, overlooked Antuco, whose gaping crater stretched two miles away. The volcano roared like an enormous monster, like the leviathans of apocalyptic days, and vomited forth burning smoke mingled with torrents of sooty flame. The cirque of mountains that surrounded it seemed to be on fire; Hailstones of incandescent stones, clouds of reddish vapors, rockets of lava, gathered in sparkling sheaves. An immense brilliance, which increased from moment to moment, a dazzling explosion filled this vast circuit with its intense reverberations, while the sun, gradually stripped of its twilight glow, disappeared like a dead star in the shadows of the horizon.

Paganel and Glenarvan could have remained for a long time contemplating this magnificent struggle between earthly and celestial fires; the impromptu woodcutters gave way to artists; but Wilson, less enthusiastic, reminded them of the situation. Wood was indeed scarce; fortunately, a thin, dry lichen covered the rocks; a large supply was gathered from this, as well as from a certain plant called "llaretta," whose root could burn sufficiently. This precious fuel, brought back to the *casucha* , was piled into the hearth. The fire was difficult to light and especially to maintain. The very thin air no longer provided enough oxygen for its sustenance; at least, that was the reason given by the major.

"On the other hand," he added, "the water will not need 100 degrees of heat to boil; those who like coffee made with 100-degree water will be forced to do without it, because at that temperature boiling will occur before 90 degrees."

Mac Nabbs was right, and the thermometer, plunged into the boiler water as soon as it boiled, registered only eighty-seven degrees.

Everyone sipped their hot coffee with relish; as for the dried meat, it seemed a little lacking, prompting Paganel to make a remark that was as sensible as it was pointless.

"Good heavens," he said, "one must admit that a grilled llama would not be unwelcome! It is said that this animal replaces beef and mutton, and I would be very glad to know if this is true from a nutritional point of view!"

—What! said the major, you are not happy with our supper, learned Paganel?

—Pleased to meet you, my good major; however, I must admit that a venison dish would be welcome.

"You are a sybarite," said Mac Nabbs.

—I accept the title, Major; but you yourself, whatever you may say, wouldn't turn your nose up at any old steak!

"That's likely," replied the major.

—And if you were asked to go and take up a lookout post despite the cold and the night, would you go without a word of complaint?

"Of course, and provided it pleases you…"

Mac Nabbs' companions hadn't had time to thank him and curb his incessant helpfulness when distant howls were heard. They went on for a long time. These were not the cries of isolated animals, but those of a herd approaching rapidly.

Having provided the hut, did Providence now intend to offer supper? This was the geographer's thought. But Glenarvan dampened his enthusiasm somewhat by pointing out that the quadrupeds of the Andes are never found at such a high altitude.

"So, where's that noise coming from?" said Tom Austin. "Do you hear how close it's getting!"

"An avalanche?" said Mulrady.

"Impossible! Those are real howls," replied Paganel.

—Let's see, said Glenarvan.

"And let's see how we do it as hunters," replied the major, who took out his rifle.

They all rushed out of the *casucha* . Night had fallen, dark and starry. The moon had not yet shown the half-eaten disk of its last phase.

The northern and eastern peaks vanished into darkness, and all that could be seen were the fantastical silhouettes of a few towering rocks. The howls—the howls of terrified beasts—redoubled. They came from the shadowy part of the mountain ranges. What was happening?

Suddenly, a furious avalanche arrived, but an avalanche of animated beings, mad with terror. The entire plateau seemed to stir. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of these animals came forth, producing a deafening roar despite the thin air. Were they wild beasts of the pampas, or merely a herd of llamas and vicuñas? Glenarvan, Mac Nabbs, Robert, and Austin, the two sailors, barely had time to throw themselves to the ground before this living whirlwind passed just a few feet above them.

Paganel, who, being a night-vision victim, was standing upright to see better, was knocked over in the blink of an eye.

At that moment, a gunshot rang out.

The major had fired blindly. It seemed to him that an animal fell a few steps from him, while the whole gang, carried away by its irresistible momentum and redoubling its shouts, disappeared down the slopes lit by the reflection of the volcano.

"Ah! I have them," said a voice, —the voice of Paganel.

"And what are you holding?" asked Glenarvan.

—My glasses, by Jove! It's the least one could expect to lose their glasses in a fight like this!

—You're not hurt?…

—No, a little trampled. But by whom?

"By this," replied the major, dragging behind him the animal he had killed.

Everyone hurried back to the hut, and by the light of the hearth they examined Mac Nabbs' "gunshot".

It was a pretty creature, resembling a small, humpless camel; it had a fine head, a flattened body, long, slender legs, fine, café-au-lait hair, and a white-spotted underbelly. No sooner had Paganel looked at it than he exclaimed:

"It's a guanaco!"

"What is a guanaco?" asked Glenarvan.

"A beast that can be eaten," replied Paganel.

—And is that good?

—Delicious. A dish fit for Olympian delight. I knew we'd have fresh meat for supper. And what meat! But who's going to butcher the animal?

"Me," said Wilson.

"Very well, I'll take care of grilling it," replied Paganel.

"So you're a cook, Mr. Paganel?" said Robert.

"Of course, my boy, since I am French! In a Frenchman there is always a cook."

Five minutes later, Paganel placed large slices of venison on the coals produced by the *llaretta root* . Ten minutes later, he served this very appetizing meat to his companions under the name of "guanaque fillets".

No one made any fuss, and everyone bit into it with gusto.

But, to the geographer's great astonishment, a general grimace, accompanied by a unanimous "yuck," greeted the first bite.

"It's horrible!" said one of them.

"It's inedible!" replied the other.

The poor scholar, whatever he might have thought, had to admit that this grilled meat could not be accepted, even by the starving. So they began to throw a few jokes at him, which he understood perfectly well, moreover, and to mock his "dish of Olympus"; he himself was trying to understand why this guanaco meat, truly good and highly esteemed, had become detestable in his hands, when a sudden thought crossed his mind.

"I've got it!" he cried. "Good heavens! I've got it, I've found it!"

"Is this meat that's too far gone?" asked Mac Nabbs calmly.

—No, you intolerant major, but meat that's been walking too much! How could I have forgotten that?

"What do you mean, Mr. Paganel?" asked Tom Austin.

—I mean that guanaco is only good when it has been killed at rest; if it is hunted for a long time, if it runs for a long time, its flesh is no longer edible. I can therefore say by taste that this animal came from far away, and consequently the entire herd.

"Are you certain of that fact?" said Glenarvan.

—Absolutely certain.

—But what event, what phenomenon could have frightened these animals so and chased them away at the hour when they should be peacefully asleep in their den?

"To that, my dear Glenarvan," said Paganel, "it is impossible for me to answer you. If you take my advice, let us go to sleep without further ado. For my part, I am dying of sleep. Shall we sleep, Major?"

"Let's sleep, Paganel."

With that, everyone wrapped themselves in their *ponchos* , the fire was rekindled for the night, and soon, in all tones and on all rhythms, formidable snores arose, in the midst of which the bass of the learned geographer supported the harmonic edifice.

Alone, Glenarvan did not sleep. Secret anxieties kept him in a state of debilitating insomnia. He involuntarily thought about the herd fleeing

in a common direction, about its inexplicable fright. Guanaques could not be pursued by wild beasts.

At this altitude, there are hardly any, and even fewer hunters. What terror drove them towards the depths of Antuco, and what was its cause? Glenarvan had a premonition of imminent danger.

However, under the influence of a half-sleep, his thoughts gradually changed, and fears gave way to hope. He saw himself the next day, on the Andean plains. There his search would truly begin, and success might not be far off. He thought of Captain Grant, of his two sailors freed from harsh slavery.

These images flashed rapidly through his mind, each moment distracted by the crackling of the fire, a spark popping in the air, a brightly oxygenated flame illuminating the sleeping faces of his companions and casting fleeting shadows on the walls of the *casucha* . Then, his premonitions returned with greater intensity. He vaguely listened to the sounds outside, difficult to explain on these solitary peaks.

At one point, he thought he heard distant, muffled, menacing rumblings, like the rumble of thunder that did not come from the sky. However, these rumblings could only belong to a storm raging on the mountainside, a few thousand feet below its summit.

Glenarvan wanted to verify the fact, and went outside.

The moon was rising. The atmosphere was clear and calm. Not a cloud, neither above nor below. Here and there, a few shifting reflections of the flames of Antuco. No storm, no lightning. Thousands

of stars twinkled at the zenith. Yet the rumblings continued: they seemed to draw closer and race across the Andes mountain range. Glenarvan returned home more worried, wondering what the connection was between these subterranean rumblings and the flight of the guanacos. Was there a cause and effect? He looked at his watch, which read two in the morning.

However, not being certain of any immediate danger, he did not wake his companions, who were heavily asleep due to fatigue, and he himself fell into a deep sleep that lasted several hours.

Suddenly, violent crashes jolted him back to his feet. It was a deafening din, comparable to the staccato noise of countless artillery caissons rolling over a resonant pavement. Glenarvan suddenly felt the ground give way beneath his feet; he saw the *casucha* sway and open slightly.

"Alert!" he cried.

His companions, all awakened and thrown over in a jumble, were being swept down a steep slope.

Day was breaking, and the scene was terrifying. The shape of the mountains changed suddenly: the cones were truncated; the tottering peaks disappeared as if some trapdoor were opening beneath their base. Due to a phenomenon peculiar to the Andes, a massif several miles wide was shifting entirely and sliding towards the plain.

"An earthquake!" cried Paganel.

He wasn't mistaken. It was one of those frequent cataclysms on the mountainous fringe of Chile, and precisely in this region where Copiapo

was destroyed twice, and Santiago overthrown four times in fourteen years. This part of the globe is shaped by the earth's fires, and the volcanoes of this recently formed chain offer only inadequate outlets for the underground vapors. Hence these incessant tremors, known as "tremblores."

However, this plateau, to which seven men clung, dazed and terrified, clinging to clumps of lichen, was sliding with the speed of an express train, that is to say, a speed of fifty miles per hour. Not a cry was possible, not a movement to flee or stop. They could not have heard each other. The internal rumbling, the crash of avalanches, the clash of masses of granite and basalt, the swirls of pulverized snow, made all communication impossible. Sometimes the massif tumbled down without a jolt or a bump; sometimes, seized by a pitching and rolling motion like the deck of a ship tossed by the swell, skirting chasms into which pieces of the mountain fell, uprooting ancient trees, it leveled with the precision of an immense scythe all the protrusions of the eastern slope.

Consider the power of a mass weighing several billion tons, launched with ever-increasing speed at an angle of fifty degrees.

No one could have estimated the duration of that indescribable fall. No one could have foreseen the abyss into which it would plunge. Whether all were still there, alive, or whether one of them already lay at the bottom of an abyss, no one could have said. Suffocated by the speed of the fall, chilled by the cold air that penetrated them, blinded by the swirling snow, they gasped, utterly exhausted, almost lifeless, clinging to the rocks only by a supreme instinct for self-preservation.

Suddenly, a shock of unparalleled violence tore them from their slippery vehicle. They were thrown forward and rolled down the last ledges of the mountain. The plateau had come to an abrupt halt.

For a few minutes, no one moved. Finally, one of them got up, dazed by the blow, but still standing—the major. He shook off the dust that blinded him, then looked around. His companions, sprawled in a tight circle like shot from a rifle, were piled one on top of the other.

The major counted them. All but one were lying on the ground. The missing one was Robert Grant.

## Chapter XIV *The Gunshot of Providence*

The eastern slopes of the Andes are made up of long inclines that gradually fade into the plain, where a portion of the mountain range abruptly ended. In this new land, carpeted with lush pastures and bristling with magnificent trees, countless apple trees planted at the time of the conquest glittered with golden fruit and formed veritable forests. It was a corner of opulent Normandy cast into the plains, and, under any other circumstances, a traveler's eye would have been struck by this sudden transition from desert to oasis, from snow-capped peaks to verdant meadows, from winter to summer.

The ground had, moreover, regained its absolute stillness. The earthquake had subsided, and no doubt the subterranean forces were exerting their devastating influence further afield, for the Andes mountain range is always, in some place, agitated or trembling. This time, the shock had been of extreme violence. The mountain range was entirely altered. A new panorama of summits, ridges, and peaks stood

out against the blue sky, and the pampas guide would have searched in vain for his familiar landmarks.

An admirable day was dawning; the sun's rays, emerging from their humid Pacific bed, glided across the Argentinian plains and plunged into the waves of the other ocean. It was eight o'clock in the morning.

Lord Glenarvan and his companions, revived by the major's care, gradually returned to life. In short, they had suffered a terrible dizziness, but nothing more. The mountain range had descended, and they would have had every reason to congratulate themselves on a means of transport entirely provided by nature, had not one of them, the weakest, a child named Robert Grant, failed to appear.

Everyone loved him, this brave boy, Paganel who had become particularly attached to him, the major despite his coldness, everyone, and especially Glenarvan.

When he learned of Robert's disappearance, he was devastated. He pictured the poor child swallowed up in some abyss, calling out in vain to the one he called his second father.

"My friends, my friends," he said, barely holding back his tears, "we must search for him, we must find him! We cannot abandon him like this! Not a valley, not a precipice, not an abyss that must not be searched to the bottom! They will tie me with a rope! They will lower me down! I want it, do you hear me! I want it! Heaven forbid that Robert still breathes! Without him, how would we dare find his father, and by what right would we save Captain Grant, if his salvation cost his child his life!"

Glenarvan's companions listened to him without replying; they felt that he was searching their eyes for some glimmer of hope, and they lowered their gaze.

"Well," Glenarvan continued, "you heard me! You shut up!
You don't expect anything anymore! Nothing!"

There was a moment of silence; then Mac Nabbs spoke and said:

"Who among you, my friends, remembers the exact moment Robert disappeared?"

No response was given to this request.

"At least," the major continued, "you will tell me who the child was with during the descent from the mountain range?"

"Near me," replied Wilson.

—Well, until what point did you see him near you? Recall your memories. Speak.

"That's all I remember," Wilson replied. "Robert Grant was still beside me, his hand gripping a clump of lichen, less than two minutes before the impact that ended our descent."

—Less than two minutes! Pay close attention, Wilson, those minutes must have seemed long!

—Aren't you mistaken?

—I don't think I'm mistaken… That's right… Less than two minutes!

"Good!" said Mac Nabbs. "And was Robert standing to your left or to your right?"

—To my left. I remember his *poncho* whipping my face.

—And you, in relation to us, where were you positioned?…

—Also on the left.

“So, Robert could only have disappeared from this side,” said the major, turning towards the mountain and indicating his right. “I would add that, taking into account the time elapsed since his disappearance, the child must have fallen on the part of the mountain between the ground and two miles high. That is where we must look for him, dividing the different areas between us, and that is where we will find him.”

Not a word was spoken. The six men, climbing the slopes of the mountain range, spread out along its ridge at various heights and began their exploration. They kept constantly to the right of the descent line, searching every crevice, descending to the bottom of precipices partially filled with debris from the massif, and more than one emerged with his clothes in tatters, his hands and feet bleeding, having risked his life. This entire section of the Andes, except for a few inaccessible plateaus, was meticulously searched for long hours, without any of these brave men thinking of resting. A fruitless search.

The child had not only met his death in the mountains, but also found a tomb whose stone, made of some enormous rock, had closed over him forever.

Around one o'clock, Glenarvan and his companions, broken and annihilated, found themselves at the bottom of the valley.

Glenarvan was in the grip of intense pain; he could barely speak, and only these words, punctuated by sighs, came from his lips:

"I won't go! I won't go!"

Everyone understood this obstinacy, which had become a fixed idea, and respected it.

“Let’s wait,” Paganel said to the major and Tom Austin. “Let’s get some rest and restore our strength. We need it, either to resume our search or to continue our journey.”

"Yes," replied Mac Nabbs, "and let us stay, since Edward wants to remain! He hopes. But what does he hope for?"

"God knows," said Tom Austin.

"Poor Robert!" replied Paganel, wiping his eyes.

Trees grew in large numbers in the valley.

The major chose a group of tall carob trees, under which he established a temporary camp.

A few blankets, their weapons, some dried meat, and rice—that was all the travelers had left. A *river* flowed nearby, its water still muddy from the avalanche. Mulrady lit a fire on the grass and soon offered his master a warm, comforting drink. But Glenarvan refused it and remained lying on his *poncho* in deep prostration.

The day passed in this way. Night came, calm and quiet like the night before. While his companions remained motionless, though not sleepy, Glenarvan climbed the slopes of the mountain range. He listened intently, still hoping that a final call would reach him. He ventured far, high, alone, pressing his ear to the ground, listening and stifling the beating of his heart, calling out in a desperate voice.

All night long, the poor lord wandered in the mountains. Sometimes Paganel, sometimes the major followed him, ready to come to his aid on the slippery ridges and at the edge of the chasms into which his needless imprudence had led him. But his last efforts were in vain, and to the thousand times he cried, "Robert! Robert!" only the echo answered, repeating that mourned name.

Day broke. Glenarvan had to be retrieved from the distant plateaus and, against his will, brought back to camp. His despair was dreadful. Who would have dared speak to him of leaving and suggest he abandon this dreadful valley? However, provisions were running low. The Argentine guides promised by the muleteer, and the horses needed to cross the pampas, were to meet nearby. Retracing their steps presented more difficulties than forging ahead. Besides, the *Duncan had been destined for the Atlantic Ocean* . All the serious reasons for this predicament made any further delay impossible, and, in everyone's best interest, the time to leave could not be postponed.

It was Mac Nabbs who tried to pull Glenarvan from his grief. He spoke for a long time without his friend seeming to hear him. Glenarvan shook his head.

A few words, however, parted her lips.

"Leave?" he said.

—Yes! Let's go.

—One more hour!

"Yes, one more hour," replied the dignified major.

And, when the hour was up, Glenarvan begged for another hour. He looked like a condemned man pleading for a longer life.

This continued until about noon. Then Mac Nabbs, in everyone's opinion, no longer hesitated, and told Glenarvan that they had to leave, and that the lives of his companions depended on a prompt decision.

"Yes! Yes!" replied Glenarvan. "Let's go! Let's go!"

But as he spoke, his eyes turned away from Mac Nabbs; his gaze fixed on a black dot in the air. Suddenly, his hand rose and remained motionless as if petrified.

"There! There," he said, "look! Look!"

All eyes turned skyward, in the direction so emphatically indicated. At that moment, the black dot was visibly growing larger. It was a bird soaring at an immeasurable height.

"A condor," said Paganel.

“Yes, a condor,” replied Glenarvan. “Who knows? It’s coming! It’s landing! Let’s wait!”

What was Glenarvan hoping for? Was his reason wandering?

"Who knows?" he had said.

Paganel was right. The condor was becoming more visible by the moment. This magnificent bird, once revered by the Incas, is the king of the southern Andes. In these regions, it reaches an extraordinary size.

Its strength is prodigious, and it often hurls oxen into the depths of ravines. It attacks sheep, horses, and young calves wandering across the plains, snatching them up in its talons at great heights. It is not uncommon for it to soar twenty thousand feet above the ground, that is to say, at the limit that man cannot cross. From there, invisible to the best eyes, this king of the skies casts a piercing gaze upon the earthly regions, and distinguishes the faintest objects with a power of vision that astonishes naturalists.

"What had this condor seen? A corpse, Robert Grant's!" "Who knows?" Glenarvan repeated, never taking his eyes off him. The enormous bird approached, sometimes gliding, sometimes falling with the speed of inert bodies abandoned in space. Soon it was circling with a wide radius, less than a hundred fathoms above the ground. It was perfectly visible. Its wingspan was over fifteen feet. Its powerful wings carried it almost without flapping, for it is the nature of great birds to fly with majestic calm, while insects need a thousand wingbeats per second to stay aloft.

The major and Wilson had seized their rifles, but Glenarvan stopped them with a gesture. The condor, in the folds of its flight, was circling a kind of inaccessible plateau located a quarter of a mile away on the slopes of the Andes. It turned with dizzying speed, opening and closing its formidable talons, and shaking its cartilaginous crest.

"It's there! There!" cried Glenarvan.

Then, suddenly, a thought crossed his mind.

"If Robert is still alive!" he cried, letting out a terrible exclamation, "that bird... Fire! My friends! Fire!"

But it was too late. The condor had disappeared behind high rocky outcrops. A second passed, a second that the needle must have taken a century to beat! Then the enormous bird reappeared heavily laden and rising with a heavier flight.

A cry of horror was heard. In the condor's talons, an inanimate body appeared, suspended and tossed about—that of Robert Grant. The bird was lifting him by his clothes and swaying in the air less than one hundred and fifty feet above the camp; it had spotted the travelers, and, seeking to escape with its heavy prey, it was violently beating the atmospheric layers with its wings.

"Ah!" cried Glenarvan, "let Robert's corpse shatter on these rocks, rather than serve..."

He did not finish, and, seizing Wilson's rifle, he tried to bring the condor down with his aim.

But his arm was trembling. He couldn't focus on his weapon. His eyes were blurring.

"Let me handle this," said the major.

And with a calm eye, a steady hand, and an immobile body, he aimed at the bird, which was already three hundred feet away from him.

But before he had even pulled the trigger of his rifle, a shot rang out from the valley floor; white smoke billowed between two masses of basalt, and the condor, struck in the head, tumbled slowly to the ground, supported by its large, outstretched wings that acted as a parachute. It hadn't released its prey, and it was with a certain slowness that it came to rest on the ground, ten paces from the banks of the stream.

"To us! To us!" said Glenarvan.

And without looking for the source of this providential gunshot, he rushed towards the condor. His companions followed him running.

When they arrived, the bird was dead, and Robert's body was disappearing beneath its broad wings. Glenarvan threw himself upon the child's corpse, snatched it from the bird's talons, laid it on the grass, and pressed his ear against the chest of the lifeless body.

Never did a more terrible cry of joy escape human lips than at that moment when Glenarvan rose up, repeating:

"He lives! He's still alive!"

In an instant, Robert was stripped of his clothes, and his face was bathed in cool water. He made a movement, he opened his eyes, he looked around, he uttered a few words, and it was to say:

"Ah! You, *my lord* ... My father!..."

Glenarvan could not answer; emotion choked him, and, kneeling, he wept beside this child so miraculously saved.

## Chapter XV *Jacques Paganel's Spanish*

After the immense danger he had just escaped, Robert faced another, no less great: being overwhelmed with affection. Although he was still very weak, not one of these kind people could resist the desire to press him to their heart. It seems that such tender embraces are not fatal to the sick, for the child did not die from them. On the contrary.

But after the rescued man, they thought of the savior, and it was naturally the major who had the idea to look around. Fifty paces from the *river* , a very tall man stood motionless on one of the first steps of the mountain. A long rifle lay at his feet. This man, who had suddenly appeared, had broad shoulders, long hair tied back with leather cords. He was over six feet tall. His tanned face was red between the eyes and mouth, black on the lower eyelid, and white on the forehead. Dressed in the style of the frontier Patagonians, the native wore a splendid cloak decorated with red arabesques, made from the underside of the neck and legs of a guanaco, sewn with ostrich sinew, and with the silky wool turned inside out. Under his cloak was a fox-skin garment, tight at the waist, which ended in a point at the front. Hanging from her belt was a small bag containing the colors she used to paint her face. Her boots were made from a single piece of oxhide and fastened at the ankle with regularly crossed straps.

The figure of this Patagonian was superb and denoted genuine intelligence, despite the motley coat of paint. He waited in a dignified pose. Seeing him motionless and grave on his rocky pedestal, one might have mistaken him for the statue of composure.

The major, as soon as he saw him, pointed him out to Glenarvan, who ran to him. The Patagonian took two steps forward. Glenarvan took his hand and clasped it in his own. There was in the lord's gaze, in the fullness of his face, in his entire expression, such a feeling of recognition, such an expression of gratitude, that the native could not be mistaken. He inclined his head gently and uttered a few words that neither the major nor his friend could understand.

Then the Patagonian, after carefully observing the strangers, changed his language; but, whatever he did, this new idiom was no more understood than the first. However, certain expressions used by the native struck Glenarvan. They seemed to belong to the Spanish language, of which he knew a few common words.

" *Spanish?* " he said.

The Patagonian shook his head up and down, an alternating movement which has the same affirmative meaning among all peoples.

"Well," said the major, "that's our friend Paganel's problem. He's glad he had the idea to learn Spanish!"

Paganel was summoned. He rushed over immediately and greeted the Patagonian with a typically French grace, which the latter probably didn't understand at all. The learned geographer was informed of the situation.

"Perfect," he said.

And, opening his mouth wide to articulate better, he said:

“ *You are a homem of bem!* »

The native listened intently, but did not reply.

"He doesn't understand," said the geographer.

"Perhaps you're not emphasizing it correctly?" replied the major.

"That's right. Damn accent!"

And again Paganel began his compliment.

He achieved the same success.

"Let's change the subject," he said, and, speaking with masterful slowness, he uttered these words:

“ *Sem duvida, um patagâo* .”

The other remained silent, just as he had been before.

" *Twelve!* " added Paganel.

The Patagonian did not respond further.

" *Do you understand?* " cried Paganel so violently that he almost broke his vocal cords.

It was obvious that the Indian did not understand, because he replied, but in Spanish:

" *I don't understand* ."

It was Paganel's turn to be astonished, and he quickly moved his spectacles from his forehead to his eyes, like an annoyed man.

"May I be hanged," he said, "if I hear a word of that infernal patois! It's Araucanian, of course!"

“No,” replied Glenarvan, “that man certainly answered in Spanish.”

And turning towards the Patagonian:

" *Spanish?* " he repeated.

" *Yes, yes!* " replied the native.

Paganel's surprise turned to astonishment.

The major and Glenarvan were eyeing each other out of the corner of their eyes.

"Ah, my learned friend," said the major, while a half-smile appeared on his lips, "have you perhaps committed one of those distractions of which you seem to have a monopoly?

"Huh!" said the geographer, perking up his ears.

—Yes! It's obvious that this Patagonian speaks Spanish…

-Him?

"Him! Did you perhaps learn another language while you thought you were studying…?"

Mac Nabbs did not finish. A vigorous "oh!" from the scholar, accompanied by shrugs, cut him off abruptly.

"Major, you're going a bit too far," said Paganel in a rather dry tone.

"Well, since you don't understand!" replied Mac Nabbs.

"I don't understand, because this native speaks badly!" replied the geographer, who was beginning to get impatient.

"That is to say, he speaks badly because you do not understand," the major calmly retorted.

"Mac Nabbs," said Glenarvan, "that's an inadmissible supposition. However absent-minded our friend Paganel may be, one cannot suppose that his absent-mindedness would have gone so far as to learn one language for the sake of another!"

—So, my dear Edward, or rather you, my brave Paganel, explain to me what is happening here.

“I’m not explaining,” replied Paganel, “I’m simply stating the facts. Here is the book in which I practice the difficulties of the Spanish language daily! Examine it, Major, and you’ll see if I can impress you!”

That said, Paganel rummaged through his many pockets; after a few minutes of searching, he pulled out a volume in very poor condition, and presented it with an air of confidence.

The major took the book and looked at it:

"Well, what is this work?" he asked.

"It's the *Lusiads* ," replied Paganel, "a magnificent epic, which..."

"The *Lusiads!"* exclaimed Glenarvan.

—Yes, my friend, the *Lusiads* of the great Camões, nothing more and nothing less!

"Camoëns," repeated Glenarvan, "but, my unfortunate friend, Camoëns is Portuguese! It's Portuguese you've been learning for six weeks!"

—Camoëns! *Lusiades!* Portuguese!…»

Paganel could say no more. His eyes blurred behind his glasses, while a burst of Homeric laughter erupted in his ears, for all his companions were there surrounding him.

The Patagonian did not flinch; he patiently awaited an explanation for an incident that was absolutely incomprehensible to him.

“Ah! Insane! Madman!” said Paganel at last. “What! Is that so? Isn’t this some invention made for pleasure? Did I do that? But it’s a confusion of languages, like at Babel! Ah! My friends! My friends! To set out for India and arrive in Chile! To learn Spanish and speak Portuguese, that’s too much, and if it continues, one day I’ll throw myself out the window instead of throwing away my cigar!”

Listening to Paganel take his misadventure so seriously, seeing his comical disappointment, it was impossible to keep a straight face. Besides, he was setting an example.

"Laugh, my friends!" he said, "laugh heartily! You won't laugh at me as much as I laugh at myself!"

And he let out the most tremendous burst of laughter that ever came from the mouth of a scholar.

"It is nonetheless true that we are without an interpreter," said the major.

“Oh! Don’t be distressed,” replied Paganel; “Portuguese and Spanish are so similar that I made a mistake; but also, this similarity will help me to quickly correct my error, and before long I want to thank this worthy Patagonian in the language he speaks so well.”

Paganel was right, for soon he was able to exchange a few words with the native; he even learned that the Patagonian's name was Thalcave, a word which in the Araucanian language means "The Thunderer".

This nickname probably came from his skill in handling firearms.

But what Glenarvan was particularly pleased to learn was that the Patagonian was a guide by trade, and a guide of the pampas. There was something so providential about this encounter that the success of the undertaking already seemed a fait accompli, and no one doubted Captain Grant's safety any longer. However, the travelers and the Patagonian had returned to Robert.

He stretched out his arms towards the native, who, without saying a word, put his hand on his head.

He examined the child and felt his aching limbs.

Then, smiling, he went to gather a few handfuls of wild celery from the banks of the *river* and rubbed it on the sick boy's body. Under this massage, performed with infinite delicacy, the child felt his strength return, and it was clear that a few hours of rest would be enough to make him better.

It was therefore decided that the day and the following night would be spent at the camp. Two serious issues, however, remained to be

resolved, concerning food and transportation. Provisions and mules were also lacking. Fortunately, Thalcave was there. This guide, accustomed to leading travelers along the Patagonian borders, and one of the most intelligent *baqueanos* in the country, undertook to provide Glenarvan with everything his small group lacked. He offered to take him to an Indian settlement, no more than four miles away, where the necessary supplies for the expedition could be found. This offer was made partly through gestures, partly in Spanish, which Paganel managed to understand. It was accepted.

Immediately, Glenarvan and his learned friend, taking leave of their companions, went up the *river* under the guidance of the Patagonian.

They walked briskly for an hour and a half, taking long strides, to follow the giant Thalcave. This entire Andean region was charming and abundantly fertile. Lush pastures stretched one after another and could easily have fed an army of one hundred thousand ruminants.

Large ponds, linked together by the intricate network of *rivers* , provided these plains with lush, verdant moisture. Black-headed swans frolicked capriciously, vying for control of the waters with numerous ostriches that scampered across the llanos. The birdlife was brilliant, and quite noisy too, but wonderfully diverse. The 'Isacas,' graceful grayish doves with white-streaked plumage, and the yellow cardinals bloomed on the tree branches like living flowers; homing pigeons crisscrossed the air, while all the feathered sparrows—the 'chingolos,' the 'hilgueros,' and the 'monjitas'—chasing each other at full speed, filled the air with sparkling chirps.

Jacques Paganel walked from one wonder to the next; interjections constantly escaped his lips, to the astonishment of the Patagonian, who found it perfectly natural that there should be birds in the air, swans on the ponds, and grass in the meadows. The scholar had no reason to regret his walk, nor to complain about its length. He had scarcely thought he had set off when the Indians' encampment came into view.

This *hermitage* occupied the bottom of a narrow valley nestled between the foothills of the Andes. There, in huts made of branches, lived about thirty nomadic natives grazing large herds of dairy cows, sheep, oxen, and horses. They moved from one pasture to another, always finding a table set for their four-legged guests.

A hybrid type of the Araucanian, Pehuenche and Aucas races, these Ando-Peruvians, of olive color, of medium height, of massive shapes, with a low forehead, an almost circular face, thin lips, prominent cheekbones, effeminate features, a cold physiognomy, would not have offered to the eyes of an anthropologist the character of pure races.

In short, they were uninteresting natives.

But Glenarvan was after their herd, not them. As long as they had oxen and horses, he didn't ask for more.

Thalcave took charge of the negotiation, which was brief. In exchange for seven small, fully harnessed Argentine horses, about a hundred pounds of *charqui* or dried meat, some measures of rice, and leather water skins, the Indians, lacking wine or rum, which they would have preferred, accepted twenty ounces of gold, the value of which they knew perfectly well. Glenarvan wanted to buy an eighth horse for the Patagonian, but the latter made it clear that it was unnecessary.

This deal concluded, Glenarvan took leave of his new "suppliers," to use Paganel's expression, and returned to the camp in less than half an hour. His arrival was greeted with cheers, which he kindly passed on to those to whom they belonged, namely the provisions and the mounts.

Everyone ate with appetite. Robert took some food; his strength had almost entirely returned to him.

The end of the day was spent in complete rest.

We talked a little about everything, about the dear absentees, about the *Duncan* , about Captain John Mangles, about his brave crew, about Harry Grant, who was perhaps not far away.

As for Paganel, he never left the Indian's side; he was practically a shadow of Thalcave. He felt no comfort at seeing a real Patagonian, beside whom he would have seemed a dwarf, a Patagonian who could almost rival that Emperor Maximin and that Congo Negro seen by the scholar Van Der Brock, both eight feet tall! Then he would bombard the serious Indian with Spanish phrases, and the latter let him. The geographer studied, this time without a book. One could hear him articulating resounding words with his throat, tongue, and jaw.

"If I don't pick up the accent," he kept repeating to the major, "don't blame me! But who would have thought that one day it would be a Patagonian who would teach me Spanish?"

## Chapter XVI *The Rio Colorado*

The following day, October 22, at eight o'clock, Thalcave gave the signal to depart. The Argentinian soil, between the twenty-second and

forty-second degrees, slopes from west to east; the travelers only had to descend a gentle slope to the sea.

When the Patagonian refused the horse Glenarvan offered him, the latter thought he preferred to go on foot, following the custom of some guides, and indeed, his long legs must have made walking easy for him. But Glenarvan was mistaken.

As he was about to leave, Thalcave whistled in a peculiar way. Immediately, a magnificent Argentinian horse, of superb size, emerged from a small nearby wood and went to its master's call.

The animal was of perfect beauty; its brown color indicated a powerful, proud, courageous, and spirited animal; it had a light, finely set head, wide-open nostrils, a keen eye, broad hocks, a well-defined withers, a deep chest, and long pasterns—in short, all the qualities that constitute strength and agility. The major, a true connoisseur, admired without reservation this specimen of the Pampas breed, to which he found certain similarities with the hunter.

English. This beautiful animal was called "Thaouka", meaning "bird" in the Patagonian language, and it rightfully deserved that name.

When Thalcave was in the saddle, his horse leaped beneath him. The Patagonian, an accomplished horseman, was magnificent to behold. His harness included the two hunting implements used on the Argentine plains, the "bolas" and the "lazo." The bolas consist of three balls joined together by a leather strap, attached to the front of the recado.

The Indian often hurls them from a hundred paces away at the animal or enemy he is pursuing, and with such precision that they wrap

around its legs and bring it down instantly. It is therefore a formidable weapon in his hands, and he wields it with surprising skill. The *lazo* , on the other hand, never leaves the hand that brandishes it. It consists solely of a thirty-foot-long rope, formed by joining two tightly braided hides, and ending in a slipknot that slides through an iron ring. It is this slipknot that the right hand throws, while the left holds the rest of the *lazo* , the end of which is securely fastened to the saddle. A long rifle slung over the shoulder completed the Patagonian's offensive weapons.

Thalcave, without noticing the admiration produced by his natural grace, his ease and his proud nonchalance, took the lead of the troop, and they set off, sometimes at a gallop, sometimes at the walk of the horses, to whom the gait of the trot seemed to be unknown.

Robert mounted with great boldness, and promptly reassured Glenarvan of his ability to stay in the saddle.

At the very foot of the mountain range begins the pampas plain. It can be divided into three parts.

The first stretches from the Andes Mountains for a distance of two hundred and fifty miles, covered with low trees and bushes. The second, four hundred and fifty miles wide, is carpeted with magnificent grass and ends one hundred and eighty miles from Buenos Aires. From this point to the sea, the traveler's steps tread across immense meadows of alfalfa and thistles.

This is the third part of the pampas.

Emerging from the gorges of the Cordillera, Glenarvan's troop first encountered a large quantity of sand dunes called "medanos", veritable

waves incessantly agitated by the wind, when the roots of the plants do not chain them to the ground.

This sand was extremely fine; thus, at the slightest breeze, it could be seen flying away in light wisps, or forming veritable waterspouts that rose to a considerable height. This spectacle was both a pleasure and an annoyance to the eyes: a pleasure, because nothing was more curious than these waterspouts wandering across the plain, struggling, merging, crashing down, rising again in indescribable disorder; an annoyance, because an impalpable dust rose from these countless *clouds* and penetrated even the most tightly closed eyelids.

This phenomenon lasted for much of the day under the influence of the north winds. We nevertheless made rapid progress, and, around six o'clock, the mountain ranges, forty miles away, presented a blackish appearance already lost in the evening mists.

The travelers were a little tired from their journey, which could be estimated at thirty-eight miles. So they were pleased to see bedtime approaching.

They camped on the banks of the rapid Neuquem, a torrential *river* with murky waters, hemmed in by high red cliffs. The Neuquem is called Ramid or Comoe by some geographers, and originates in the middle of lakes known only to the Indians.

The night and the following day offered no noteworthy incidents. Progress was swift and efficient. Level ground and a bearable temperature made advancing easy. Around midday, however, the sun beat down with intensely hot rays. As evening fell, a band of clouds streaked across the southwestern horizon, a sure sign of a change in the

weather. The Patagonian could not be mistaken, and with his finger he indicated to the geographer the westernmost part of the sky.

"Well! I know," said Paganel, and addressing his companions: "Here," he added, "is a change of weather coming. We're going to have a pampero."

And he explained that this pampero is common on the Argentine plains. It's a very dry southwest wind. Thalcave hadn't been mistaken, and during the night, which was quite unpleasant for people sheltered only by a simple *poncho* , the pampero blew with great force. The horses lay down on the ground, and the men huddled close beside them. Glenarvan feared being delayed if this hurricane persisted; but Paganel reassured him after consulting his barometer.

“Usually,” he told him, “the pampero creates storms that last three days, which the drop in temperature clearly indicates. But when, on the contrary, the barometer rises—and that is the case—we only get away with a few hours of furious gusts. So rest assured, my dear friend, by daybreak the sky will have regained its usual clarity.”

"You speak like a book, Paganel," replied Glenarvan.

“And I am one of them,” replied Paganel. “Feel free to browse through me as much as you like.”

The book was right. At one in the morning, the wind suddenly died down, and everyone was able to find restorative sleep. The next day, they got up fresh and ready, especially Paganel, who cracked his joints with a joyful sound and stretched like a young dog.

This day was the twenty-fourth of October, and the tenth since leaving Talcahuano.

Ninety-three miles still separated the travelers from the point where the Colorado *River* crosses the thirty-seventh parallel, that is to say, three days' journey. During this crossing of the American continent, Lord Glenarvan watched with meticulous attention for the approach of the natives. He wanted to question them about Captain Grant through the Patagonian, with whom Paganel, moreover, was beginning to converse sufficiently. But they were following a route little frequented by the Indians, for the pampa routes that run from the Argentine Republic to the Andes are located further north.

Also, wandering Indians and sedentary tribes living under the law of the caciques did not meet.

If, by chance, some nomadic rider appeared in the distance, he would quickly flee, little concerned with engaging with strangers. Such a troop would surely seem suspicious to anyone venturing alone onto the plains, to the bandit whose caution would be aroused at the sight of eight well-armed and well-mounted men, as well as to the traveler who, in these deserted countryside, might mistake them for men of ill intent. Hence, it was absolutely impossible to converse with honest folk or raiders.

It was regrettable not to find oneself facing a band of "rastreadores," even if the conversation had to begin with gunfire. However, while Glenarvan, in the interest of his research, had to regret the absence of the Indians, an incident occurred that singularly justified the interpretation of the document.

Several times the route taken by the expedition intersected trails across the pampas, including a fairly important road—the one from Carmen to Mendoza—recognizable by the bones of domestic animals, mules, horses, sheep, or oxen, which littered it with their disintegrated remains, pecked by birds of prey and bleached by the bleaching action of the atmosphere. They were there by the thousands, and no doubt more than one human skeleton mingled its dust with the dust of the humblest animals.

Until then, Thalcave had made no observations on the route he had rigorously followed. He understood, however, that, not connecting to any route in the pampas, it led neither to the towns, nor to the villages, nor to the settlements of the Argentine provinces.

Each morning, they walked towards the rising sun, without deviating from the straight line, and each evening the setting sun was at the opposite end of that line. As the guide, Thalcave must therefore have been astonished to see that not only was he not leading, but that he himself was being led.

However, if he was surprised, it was with the nature reserve for the Indians, and regarding simple paths neglected until then, he made no comment.

But on that day, having arrived at the aforementioned communication route, he stopped his horse and turned towards Paganel:

"Carmen's road," he said.

—Well, yes, my brave Patagonian, replied the geographer in his purest Spanish, on the road from Carmen to Mendoza.

"We're not taking it?" Thalcave replied.

"No," replied Paganel.

—And where are we going?

—Still to the east.

—It's going nowhere.

"Who knows?"

Thalcave fell silent and looked at the scholar with a profoundly surprised expression. He simply couldn't believe that Paganel was joking in the slightest. An Indian, always serious, never thinks that someone isn't speaking seriously.

"So you're not going to Carmen?" he added after a moment of silence.

—No, replied Paganel.

—Not in Mendoza?

—No more than that.

At that moment, Glenarvan, having rejoined Paganel, asked him what Thalcave was saying, and why he had stopped.

"He asked me if we were going either to Carmen or to Mendoza," replied Paganel, "and he is very surprised by my negative answer to his double question.

"By the way, our route must seem very strange to him,
" Glenarvan continued.

—I believe him. He says we're not going anywhere.

—Well, Paganel, couldn't you explain to him the purpose of our expedition, and what interest we have in always marching eastward?

"That will be very difficult," replied Paganel, "because an Indian understands nothing of earthly degrees, and the story of the document will be a fantastic story for him."

"But," said the major seriously, "will it be history that he won't understand, or the historian?"

"Ah! Mac Nabbs," replied Paganel, "so you still doubt my Spanish!"

—Well, try it, my worthy friend.

"Let's try."

Paganel returned to the Patagonian and began a speech frequently interrupted by a lack of words, by the difficulty of translating certain particularities, and of explaining to a semi-ignorant savage details that were very difficult for him to understand.

The scholar was a curious sight. He gesticulated, he articulated, he busied himself in a hundred different ways, and drops of sweat cascaded from his forehead to his chest. When his tongue failed him, his arm came to his aid. Paganel dismounted, and there, on the sand, he drew a map where latitudes and longitudes intersected, where the two oceans were marked, where the road to Carmen stretched out. Never had a professor been in such a predicament. Thalcave watched this display calmly, without revealing whether he understood or not. The geographer's lesson lasted more than half an hour. Then he fell silent,

mopped his face, which was melting with sweat, and looked at the Patagonian.

"Did he understand?" asked Glenarvan.

“We’ll see,” replied Paganel, “but if he hasn’t understood, I give up.”

Thalcave did not move. He did not speak either. His eyes remained fixed on the figures drawn on the sand, which the wind was gradually erasing.

"Well?" Paganel asked him.

Thalcave did not seem to hear him. Paganel could already see an ironic smile forming on the major's lips, and, wanting to come to his honor, he was about to resume his geographical demonstrations with renewed energy, when the Patagonian stopped him with a gesture.

"Are you looking for a prisoner?" he said.

—Yes, replied Paganel.

—And precisely on that line between the setting sun and the rising sun, added Thalcave, specifying by an Indian-style comparison the route from west to east.

—Yes, yes, that's it.

—And it is your god, said the Patagonian, who entrusted the prisoner's secrets to the waves of the vast sea?

—God himself.

"Then let his will be done," replied Thalcave with a certain solemnity, "we will march east, and if need be, all the way to the sun!"

Paganel, triumphant in the person of his student, immediately translated the Indian's answers to his companions.

"What an intelligent race!" he added. "Out of twenty peasants in my country, nineteen wouldn't have understood a thing I explained."

Glenarvan urged Paganel to ask the Patagonian if he had heard of any foreigners falling into the hands of pampas Indians.

Paganel made the request, and waited for the answer.

"Perhaps," said the Patagonian.

At this word, immediately translated, Thalcave was surrounded by the seven travelers. They questioned him with their eyes.

Paganel, moved, and barely finding his words, resumed this very interesting interrogation, while his eyes fixed on the serious Indian, trying to catch his answer before it came out of his lips.

Each Spanish word spoken by the Patagonian, he repeated in English, so that his companions heard him speaking, as it were, in their natural language.

"And what about this prisoner?" asked Paganel.

"He was a foreigner," replied Thalcave, "a European."

—Did you see it?

—No, but he is mentioned in the stories of the Indians.
He was a brave man! He had the heart of a bull!

"A bull's heart!" said Paganel. "Ah!"

Magnificent Patagonian language! You understand, my friends! A courageous man!

"My father!" cried Robert Grant.

Then, addressing Paganel:

"How do you say ' *that's my father* ' in Spanish?" he asked him.

" *Es mio padre* ," replied the geographer.

Immediately Robert, taking Thalcave's hands, said in a soft voice:

" *He's my father!"*

" *Suo padre!* " replied the Patagonian, whose eyes lit up.

He took the child in his arms, lifted him from his horse, and regarded him with the most curious sympathy. His intelligent face was marked by a peaceful emotion.

But Paganel had not finished his interrogation.

Where was this prisoner? What was he doing? When had Thalcave heard about him? All these questions crowded into his mind at once.

The answers came quickly, and he learned that the European was a slave of one of the Indian tribes that roam the country between the Colorado and the *Rio* Negro.

"But where was he last?" asked Paganel.

—At Chief Calfoucoura's house, replied Thalcave.

—On the line we have followed so far?

-Yes.

—And who is this chieftain?

—The chief of the Poyuches Indians, a man of two tongues, a man of two hearts!

"That is to say, false in word and false in deed," said Paganel, after translating this beautiful image from the Patagonian language to his companions. "And will we be able to free our friend?" he added.

—Perhaps, if it is still in the hands of the Indians.

—And when did you first hear about it?

"A long time ago, and since then, the sun has already brought two summers back to the pampas sky!"

Glenarvan's joy was indescribable. This answer perfectly matched the document's date. But one question remained to be asked of Thalcave. Paganel asked it immediately.

"You're talking about one prisoner," he said, "weren't there three?"

"I don't know," replied Thalcave.

—And you know nothing about the current situation?

-Nothing."

This last word ended the conversation. It was possible that the three prisoners had been separated for a long time. But what emerged from the information given by the Patagonian was that the Indians were speaking of a European who had fallen into their hands. The date of his captivity, the very place where he was supposed to be, everything, down to the Patagonian phrase used to express his courage, clearly referred to Captain Harry Grant. The next day, October 25, the travelers resumed their journey eastward with renewed energy. The plain, still bleak and monotonous, formed one of those endless expanses called "travesias" in the local language. The clay soil, exposed to the winds, was perfectly level; not a stone, not even a pebble, except in a few arid and dried-up ravines, or on the edges of the artificial ponds dug by the Indians. At long intervals appeared low forests with blackish crowns pierced here and there by white carob trees whose pod contains a sweet, pleasant and refreshing pulp; then, a few clumps of terebinths, "chanares", wild broom, and all kinds of thorny trees whose thinness already betrayed the infertility of the soil.

The 26th was a tiring day. The goal was to reach the *Rio* Colorado. But the horses, urged on by their riders, made such progress that by evening, at 69° 45' longitude, they had reached the beautiful river of the Pampas region. Its indigenous name, the Cobu-Leubu, means "great river," and after a long journey, it flows into the Atlantic. There, near its mouth, a curious phenomenon occurs: the volume of its waters decreases as it approaches the sea, either through absorption or evaporation, and the cause of this phenomenon is not yet fully understood.

Upon arriving in Colorado, Paganel's first concern was to bathe "geographically".

In its waters, colored by reddish clay, he was surprised to find them so deep, a result solely due to the melting snow under the first summer sun. Moreover, the river was wide enough that the horses could not swim across. Fortunately, a few hundred fathoms upstream, there was a wattle bridge supported by leather straps and suspended in the Indian style. The small group was thus able to cross the river and camp on the left bank.

Before going to sleep, Paganel wanted to take an exact bearing of the Colorado, and he pointed it on his map with particular care, for want of the Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou, which flowed without him in the mountains of Tibet.

For the next two days, October 27th and 28th, the journey proceeded without incident. The same monotony and the same barrenness of the terrain. Never was the landscape less varied, never the panorama more insignificant.

However, the ground became very wet. They had to cross "canadas," a kind of flooded lowland, and "esteros," permanent lagoons choked with aquatic plants. In the evening, the horses stopped at the edge of a vast lake with highly mineralized waters, Ure-Lanquem, called "bitter lake" by the Indians, which in 1862 witnessed cruel reprisals by Argentine troops.

We camped in the usual way, and the night would have been good, had it not been for the presence of monkeys, wildcats, and wild dogs. These noisy animals, no doubt in honor, but certainly to the annoyance

of European ears, performed one of those natural symphonies that a composer of the future would not have disowned.

## Chapter XVII *The Pampas*

The Argentine Pampas extends from the thirty-fourth to the fortieth degree of south latitude. The word "pampa", of Araucanian origin, means "plain of grass", and applies precisely to this region.

The tree-like mimosas of its western part and the substantial grasslands of its eastern part give it a distinctive appearance. This vegetation takes root in a layer of soil covering the reddish or yellow clayey-sandy ground. A geologist would find abundant riches if they were to examine these Tertiary-era deposits.

There lie countless antediluvian bones which the Indians attribute to great extinct races of armadillos, and beneath this plant dust lies buried the primitive history of these lands.

The American pampas are a geographical specialty, like the savannas of the Great Lakes or the steppes of Siberia. Its climate has more extreme heat and cold than that of the province of Buenos Aires, being more continental. According to Paganel's explanation, the summer heat absorbed by the ocean is slowly released during the winter. Hence, islands have a more uniform temperature than the interior of continents. Therefore, the climate of western Pampasia lacks the uniformity found on the coasts, thanks to its proximity to the Atlantic. It is subject to sudden extremes, to rapid changes that cause temperature readings to fluctuate constantly. In autumn, that is, during the months

of April and May, the rains are frequent and torrential. But, at that time of year, the weather was very dry and the temperature very high.

We set off at dawn, having checked the road; the ground, held in place by shrubs and bushes, was perfectly level; no more *pebbles* , nor the sand from which they formed, nor the dust that the wind held suspended in the air. The horses walked briskly between clumps of paja brava, the quintessential pampas grass, which serves as shelter for the Indians during storms. At certain distances, but increasingly rare, a few damp hollows allowed willows to grow, along with a certain plant, gygnerium argenteum, which thrives near fresh water. There, the horses relished a good gulp, taking what was needed when it came, and quenching their thirst for the future.

Thalcave, in front, beat the bushes. He thus frightened away the "cholinas," vipers of the most dangerous kind, whose bite can kill an ox in less than an hour. The agile Thaouka leaped over the undergrowth and helped his master clear a path for the horses that followed him.

The journey, across these flat and straight plains, was therefore accomplished easily and quickly.

No change occurred in the nature of the prairie; not a stone, not a pebble, even for a hundred miles around. Never had such monotony been encountered, nor so stubbornly prolonged. Of landscapes, of incidents, of natural surprises, there was not a trace! One had to be a Paganel, one of those enthusiastic scholars who see where there is nothing to see, to take an interest in the details of the road. On what subject? He couldn't have said. A bush at most! A blade of grass

perhaps. That was enough to excite his inexhaustible eloquence, and to instruct Robert, who delighted in listening to him.

During that day of October 29th, the plain unfolded before the travelers in its endless uniformity. Around two o'clock, long animal tracks appeared beneath the horses' hooves. They were the bones of a countless herd of oxen, piled up and bleached white. These remains did not stretch out in a winding line, such as is left behind by exhausted animals collapsing little by little onto the road.

Therefore, no one knew how to explain this gathering of skeletons in such a relatively small space, and Paganel, whatever he did, was no more stumped than anyone else. So he questioned Thalcave, who had no qualms about answering him.

A "not possible!" from the scholar and a very affirmative sign from the Patagonian greatly intrigued their companions.

"What is it then?" they asked.

"The fire from the sky," replied the geographer.

"What! Lightning would have caused such a disaster!" said Tom Austin; "a herd of five hundred head lying on the ground!"

—Thalcave affirms it, and Thalcave is not mistaken. I believe it, moreover, for the storms of the pampas are distinguished, above all others, by their fury.

May we never have to experience them!

"It's very hot," said Wilson.

"The thermometer," replied Paganel, "should read thirty degrees in the shade."

"That doesn't surprise me," said Glenarvan, "I can feel the electricity coursing through me. Let's hope this temperature doesn't last."

—Oh! Oh! said Paganel, we shouldn't count on a change of weather, since the horizon is free of any mist.

"Too bad," replied Glenarvan, "because our horses are very affected by the heat. Aren't you too hot, my boy?" he added, addressing Robert.

"No, *my lord* ," replied the little man. "I like the warmth, it's a good thing."

"Especially in winter," the major wisely observed, blowing the smoke from his cigar skyward.

That evening, we stopped near an abandoned ranch, a tangle of branches chewed with mud and covered with thatch; this hut adjoined a fence of half-rotten stakes, which was nevertheless sufficient to protect the horses during the night from fox attacks. Not that they had anything to fear personally from these animals, but the cunning beasts gnawed through their halters, and the horses took advantage of this to escape.

A few steps from the rancho, a pit had been dug that served as a kitchen and contained cooled ashes. Inside, there was a bench, a cowhide cot, a cooking pot, a spit, and a mate kettle. Mate is a beverage widely consumed in South America. It is the tea of the indigenous people. It consists of an infusion of fire-dried leaves, and it is sipped like American drinks through a straw. At Paganel's request, Thalcave

prepared a few cups of this brew, which complemented the ordinary food very well and was declared excellent.

The next day, October 30th, the sun rose through a blazing mist and poured its hottest rays upon the ground. The temperature that day must have been excessive, indeed, and unfortunately, the plain offered no shelter. Nevertheless, we bravely resumed our journey eastward. Several times we encountered immense herds which, lacking the strength to graze in the oppressive heat, lay lazily stretched out. There was no question of guardians, or rather, shepherds. Dogs accustomed to suckling the ewes when thirst drove them, watched over these numerous clusters of cows, bulls, and oxen alone. These animals, moreover, are gentle-natured and do not possess the instinctive horror of red that distinguishes their European counterparts.

"That probably comes from the fact that they graze on the grass of a republic!" said Paganel, delighted with his joke, perhaps a little too French.

Around midday, some changes occurred in the pampa, changes that could not escape eyes weary of its monotony. The grasses became sparser. They gave way to meager burdocks and gigantic thistles, nine feet high, which would have delighted every donkey on earth. Stunted thorny *shrubs* and other dark green, thorny bushes, plants favored by parched lands, grew here and there. Until then, a certain moisture retained in the clay of the prairie had sustained the pastures; the carpet of grass was thick and luxurious; but now, its surface, worn in places and torn up in many spots, revealed the underlying structure and displayed the soil's depletion. These signs of increasing drought could not be ignored, and Thalcave pointed them out.

"I'm not upset about the change," said Tom Austin; "always grass, always grass, it gets sickening after a while."

"Yes, but always grass, always water," replied the major.

“Oh! We’re not short of water,” said Wilson, “and we’ll surely find some river along our way.”

If Paganel had heard this reply, he would not have failed to say that rivers were rare between the Colorado and the sierras of the Argentine province; but at this moment he was explaining to Glenarvan a fact to which the latter had just drawn his attention.

For some time, the atmosphere seemed to be permeated with the smell of smoke. However, no fire was visible on the horizon; no smoke betrayed a distant blaze. Therefore, no natural cause could be attributed to this phenomenon. Soon, this smell of burning grass became so strong that it astonished the travelers, except for Paganel and Thalcave. The geographer, who was never troubled by the explanation of any event, gave his friends the following reply:

“We don’t see the fire,” he said, “but we smell the smoke. Now, there’s no smoke without fire, and the proverb is true in America as in Europe. So there is a fire somewhere. Only, these pampas are so flat that nothing impedes the currents of the atmosphere, and one can often smell burning grass from a distance of nearly seventy-five miles.”

"Seventy-five miles?" replied the major in an unconvincing tone.

"Just as much," affirmed Paganel. "But I would add that these conflagrations spread on a large scale and often reach a considerable size."

"Who is setting fire to the prairies?" asked Robert.

—Sometimes lightning, when the grass is dried out by the heat; sometimes also the hand of the Indians.

—And for what purpose?

They claim—I don't know to what extent this claim is well-founded—that after a fire in the pampas, the grasses grow better. This would then be a way of revitalizing the soil through the action of the ashes. For my part, I believe these fires are intended to destroy billions of ixodes, a type of parasitic insect that is particularly troublesome for livestock.

"But this forceful method," said the major, "must cost the lives of some of the livestock that roam the plain?"

—Yes, it burns with them; but what does it matter in terms of numbers?

"I'm not making a plea for them," Mac Nabbs continued, "that's their business, but for the travelers crossing the pampa. Could it not happen that they are caught by surprise and engulfed by flames?"

"How so!" exclaimed Paganel with a visible air of satisfaction, "it happens sometimes, and, for my part, I would not be sorry to witness such a spectacle."

"That's our scholar for you," replied Glenarvan, "he would push science to the point of getting himself burned alive."

“Well, no, my dear Glenarvan, but we’ve read his Cooper, and Leatherstocking taught us how to stop the flames by pulling up the grass around us within a radius of a few fathoms. Nothing could be

simpler. So, I don’t fear the approach of a fire, and I welcome it with all my heart!”

But Paganel's desires were not to be fulfilled, and if he was half-roasted, it was solely from the heat of the sun's rays, which poured forth an unbearable ardor. The horses panted under the influence of this tropical temperature. There was no shade to be hoped for, unless it came from some rare cloud veiling the flaming disc; the shadow would then run across the flat ground, and the riders, urging their mounts on, tried to stay in the cool blanket that the west winds drove before them. But the horses, soon left behind, remained behind, and the unveiled sun showered the scorched pampas with a fresh rain of fire.

However, when Wilson said that the water supply would not run out, he had not counted on the unquenchable thirst that consumed his companions that day; when he added that they would encounter some *river* along the way, he had spoken too soon. Indeed, not only were *rivers* scarce, as the flatness of the ground offered them no suitable bed, but the artificial ponds dug by the Indians were also dry.

Seeing the symptoms of drought increasing by the thousand, Paganel made some observations to Thalcave, and asked him where he expected to find water.

"At Lake Salinas," replied the Indian.

—And when will we get there?

"Tomorrow evening."

That evening, we halted after a thirty-mile sail. Everyone was counting on a good night's sleep to recover from the day's fatigues, and

it was precisely this sleep that was disturbed by a swarm of mosquitoes and gnats. Their presence indicated a change in the wind, which, indeed, shifted a quarter turn and moved to the north. These cursed insects usually disappear with the south or southwest breezes.

While the major remained calm, even amidst life's petty miseries, Paganel, on the contrary, was indignant at fate's teasing. He cursed mosquitoes and gnats to the devil and sorely missed the acidic water that would have soothed the stinging pain of his bites. Although the major tried to console him by saying that out of the three hundred thousand species of insects that naturalists count, one should consider oneself fortunate to be dealing with only two, he awoke in a very foul mood.

However, he needed no further prompting to set off again at the first light of dawn, for the goal was to reach Lake Salinas that very day. The horses were utterly exhausted; they were dying of thirst, and although their riders had gone without food for them, their rations had been severely meager. The drought was even more severe, and the heat no less unbearable under the dusty blast of the north wind, that simoom of the pampas.

During this day, the monotony of the journey was momentarily interrupted. Mulrady, who had been walking ahead, retraced his steps, signaling the approach of a party of Native Americans. This encounter was met with mixed reactions. Glenarvan considered the information these natives might provide about the survivors of the *Britannia* . Thalcave, for his part, was not at all pleased to find the nomadic Plains Indians on his route; he considered them raiders and thieves, and

sought only to avoid them. Following his orders, the small group gathered, and the weapons were readied.

Soon, the Indian detachment came into view. It consisted of only about ten natives, which reassured the Patagonian. The Indians approached to within a hundred paces. They were easily distinguishable. They were natives belonging to that Pampas race, wiped out in 1833 by General Rosas. Their high, domed, and not receding foreheads, their tall stature, and their olive complexion made them fine examples of the Indian race.

They were dressed in guanaco or skunk skins, and carried with the twenty-foot-long spear, knives, slings, *bolas* and *lazos* .

Their skill in handling the horse indicated that they were skilled riders.

They stopped a hundred paces away and seemed to be conferring, shouting and gesticulating. Glenarvan advanced towards them.

But he had not gone two fathoms before the detachment, turning about, disappeared with incredible speed.

"The cowards!" cried Paganel.

"They run away too fast for honest people," said Mac Nabbs.

"Who are these Indians?" Paganel asked Thalcave.

"Gauchos," replied the Patagonian.

"Gauchos!" Paganel repeated, turning to his companions, "Gauchos! So we didn't need to take so many precautions!"

"Why is that?" said the major.

—Because gauchos are harmless peasants.

—You think so, Paganel?

—No doubt they mistook us for thieves and ran away.

"I think rather that they did not dare to attack us," replied Glenarvan, very annoyed at not having been able to communicate with these natives, whoever they might be.

"That's my opinion," said the major, "because, if I'm not mistaken, far from being harmless, the gauchos are, on the contrary, frank and formidable bandits."

"For example!" exclaimed Paganel.

And he began to discuss this ethnological thesis vigorously, so vigorously in fact, that he managed to move the major, and elicited this unusual reply in Mac Nabbs' discussions:

"I think you're wrong, Paganel."

"Wrong?" replied the scholar.

—Yes. Thalcave himself mistook these Indians for thieves, and Thalcave knows what to expect.

"Well, Thalcave was wrong this time," Paganel retorted somewhat bitterly. "The gauchos are farmers, herders, nothing more, and I myself wrote as much in a rather noteworthy pamphlet on the natives of the pampas."

—Well, you made a mistake, Mr. Paganel.

—Me, a mistake, Mr. Mac Nabbs?

"For distraction, if you like," replied the major insistently, "and you'll only have to make a few errata in your next edition."

Paganel, very mortified to hear his geographical knowledge being discussed and even joked about, felt bad temper rising within him.

"Know, sir," he said, "that my books do not need errata of this kind!"

"Yes! On this occasion, at least," replied Mac Nabbs.

"Sir, I find you teasing today!" replied Paganel.

"And I find you sour!" retorted the major.

The discussion, as we can see, was taking unexpected turns, and on a subject that, admittedly, wasn't worth the trouble. Glenarvan thought it appropriate to intervene.

"It is certain," he said, "that there is teasing on one side and bitterness on the other, which surprises me coming from both of you."

The Patagonian, without understanding the subject of the quarrel, had easily guessed that the two friends were arguing. He smiled and said calmly:

"It's the north wind."

"The north wind!" cried Paganel. "What does the north wind have to do with any of this?"

"Ah! That's it exactly," replied Glenarvan, "it's the north wind that's causing your bad mood! I've heard it particularly irritates the nervous system in southern America."

"By Saint Patrick, Edward, you're right!" said the major, and he burst out laughing.

But Paganel, really worked up, did not want to give up the discussion, and he fell back on Glenarvan, whose intervention seemed a little too pleasant to him.

"Ah! really, *my lord* ," he said, "is my nervous system irritated?"

—Yes, Paganel, it's the north wind, a wind that causes many crimes to be committed in the pampas, like the tramontane in the countryside of Rome!

"Crimes!" replied the scholar. "Do I look like a man who wants to commit crimes?"

—I'm not saying exactly that.

—Just say right now that I want to murder you!

"Hey!" replied Glenarvan, laughing uncontrollably, "I'm afraid so. Luckily, the north wind only lasts a day!"

Everyone, at this reply, joined Glenarvan in chorus. Then Paganel snapped his fingers and went off to vent his bad mood. A quarter of an hour later, he'd forgotten all about it.

At eight o'clock in the evening, Thalcave, having pushed ahead, sighted the *ravines* of the long-desired lake. A quarter of an hour later,

the small group descended the banks of the Salinas. But there awaited them a grave disappointment. The lake was dry.

## Chapter XVIII *In Search of a Watering Place*

Lake Salinas marks the end of the chain of lagoons that connect to the Ventana and Guamini mountain ranges. Many expeditions once came from Buenos Aires to stock up on salt, as its waters contain a remarkable proportion of sodium chloride. But then, the water, evaporated by intense heat, had deposited all the salt it contained in suspension, and the lake became nothing more than a vast, shimmering mirror.

When Thalcave announced the presence of potable liquid in Lake Salinas, he was hearing about the freshwater *rivers that rush into it in many places.*

But at that moment, its tributaries were as dry as the river itself. The scorching sun had drunk it all away. Hence, general consternation arose when the parched group arrived at the dried-up banks of the Salinas. A decision had to be made. The little water they had kept in their skins was half-rotten and could not quench their thirst. Thirst was beginning to be felt cruelly. Hunger and fatigue vanished before this overwhelming need. A "roukah," a kind of leather tent pitched in a fold of the land and abandoned by the natives, served as a refuge for the exhausted travelers, while their horses, lying on the muddy banks of the lake, repulsively chewed through the seaweed and dry reeds.

When everyone had taken their places in the *rukah* , Paganel questioned Thalcave and asked his opinion on what should be done. A

brief conversation, of which Glenarvan caught a few words, nevertheless took place between the geographer and the Indian. Thalcave spoke calmly. Paganel gestured for two.

This dialogue lasted a few minutes, and the Patagonian crossed his arms.

"What did he say?" asked Glenarvan. "I thought he advised us to separate."

“Yes, in two groups,” replied Paganel. “Those of us whose horses, overcome with fatigue and thirst, can barely put one foot in front of the other, will continue as best they can along the 37th parallel. Those in better condition, on the other hand, will go ahead on this route to reconnoiter the Guamini River, which flows into Lake San Lucas, 31 miles from here. If there is enough water there, they will wait for their companions on the banks of the Guamini. If there is not enough water, they will return to meet them to spare them a pointless journey.”

"So what?" asked Tom Austin.

—So, we will have to resign ourselves to going down seventy-five miles south, to the first branches of the Sierra Ventana, where the rivers are numerous.

"That's a good idea," replied Glenarvan, "and we'll follow it without delay. My horse hasn't suffered too much from the lack of water yet, and I offer to accompany Thalcave."

"Oh! *My lord* , take me away," said Robert, as if it were a pleasure trip.

—But will you be able to follow us, my child?

—Yes! I have a fine beast that is only too eager to go forward. Would you… *My Lord* ?… Please do.

"Come along, my boy," said Glenarvan, delighted not to be separated from Robert. "The three of us," he added, "will be quite clumsy if we don't find some fresh, clear spring."

—Well, what about me? said Paganel.

“Oh! You, my dear Paganel,” replied the major, “will remain with the reserve detachment. You know the thirty-seventh parallel, the Guamini River, and the entire pampa too well to abandon us. Neither Mulrady, nor Wilson, nor I are capable of reaching Thalcave at his rendezvous, while we will march confidently under the banner of the brave Jacques Paganel.”

"I resign myself," replied the geographer, very flattered to obtain a superior command.

"But no distractions!" added the major. "Don't take us somewhere we have no business, and then bring us back, for example, to the shores of the Pacific Ocean!"

"You deserve it, you insufferable major," Paganel replied with a laugh. "However, tell me, my dear Glenarvan, how will you understand the language of Thalcave?"

"I suppose," replied Glenarvan, "that the Patagonian and I will not need to converse. Besides, with the few Spanish words I possess, I would certainly be able, in a pressing circumstance, to express my thoughts to him and understand his."

—Go then, my worthy friend, replied Paganel.

"Let's have supper first," said Glenarvan, "and sleep, if possible, until the time of departure."

We ate supper without drinking, which seemed rather unrefreshing, and then we slept, for lack of anything better to do. Paganel dreamed of torrents, waterfalls, rivers, streams, ponds, brooks, even full carafes—in short, of everything that usually contains potable water. It was a real nightmare.

The next day, at six o'clock, the horses of Thalcave, Glenarvan, and Robert Grant were saddled; they were given their last ration of water to drink, and they swallowed it with more relish than satisfaction, for it was very foul-smelling. Then the three riders mounted.

"Goodbye," said the major, Austin, Wilson and Mulrady.

"And above all, try not to come back!" added Paganel.

Soon, the Patagonian, Glenarvan and Robert lost sight, not without a certain pang of regret, of the detachment entrusted to the geographer's sagacity.

The "desertio de las Salinas", which they were crossing at the time, is a clay plain, covered with stunted shrubs ten feet high, small mimosas that the Indians call "curra-mammel", and "jumes", bushy shrubs, rich in soda.

Here and there, large patches of salt reflected the sun's rays with astonishing intensity.

The eye could easily have mistaken these "barreros" for surfaces frozen by a violent cold; but the heat of the sun quickly disabused it of that notion.

Nevertheless, this contrast of arid and scorched soil with these sparkling sheets gave this desert a very particular physiognomy that interested the eye.

Eighty miles to the south, on the contrary, the Sierra Ventana, toward which the possible drying up of the Guamini might force travelers to descend, presented a different aspect. This country, explored in 1835 by Captain FitzRoy, who then commanded the *Beagle expedition* , is superbly fertile. There, the best pastures of the Indian territory grow with unparalleled vigor; the northwest slope of the sierras is covered with luxuriant grass and descends amidst forests rich in diverse species; there one finds the "algarrobo," a type of carob tree, whose dried and powdered fruit is used to make a bread highly prized by the Indians; the "white quebracho," with long, flexible branches that weep like the European willow; the "red quebracho," of indestructible wood; the "naudubay," which catches fire with extreme ease and often causes terrible blazes; The "viraro," whose purple flowers are arranged in a pyramid shape, and finally the "timbo," which raises its immense parasol up to eighty feet into the air, under which entire herds can shelter from the sun's rays. Argentinians have often tried to colonize this rich country, without succeeding in overcoming the hostility of the indigenous people.

Certainly, one might have believed that abundant *rivers* flowed down from the slopes of the Sierra to provide the water necessary for such fertility, and indeed, even the greatest droughts never dried up these

rivers; but to reach them, one had to travel a hundred and thirty miles south. Thalcave was therefore right to head first towards Guamini, which, without diverting him from his route, was much closer.

The three horses galloped briskly. These excellent beasts undoubtedly sensed by instinct where their masters were leading them. Thaouka, in particular, displayed a valor that neither fatigue nor hardship could diminish; he crossed the parched sedges and curra-mammel bushes like a bird, uttering auspicious neighs. Glenarvan's and Robert's horses, though heavier in their gait, but spurred on by his example, followed bravely. Thalcave, motionless in his saddle, set the example for his companions that Thaouka set for his.

The Patagonian often turned his head to look at Robert Grant.

Seeing the young boy, steady and well-seated, with supple back, relaxed shoulders, legs hanging naturally, and knees firmly in the saddle, he expressed his satisfaction with an encouraging shout. Indeed, Robert Grant was becoming an excellent rider and deserved the Native American's praise.

"Well done, Robert," said Glenarvan, "Thalcave seems to congratulate you! He's applauding you, my boy."

—And what is that about, *my lord* ?

—Regarding the proper way you ride a horse.

"Oh! I'm standing firmly, and that's all," replied Robert, blushing with pleasure at hearing himself complimented.

"That's the main thing, Robert," replied Glenarvan, "but you are too modest, and I predict you will inevitably become an accomplished sportsman."

"Well," said Robert, laughing, "and what will Dad say, who wants to make me a sailor?"

—One doesn't preclude the other. While not all horsemen make good sailors, all sailors are capable of making good horsemen. Riding on the yards teaches you to hold on firmly. As for knowing how to collect your horse, how to execute oblique or circular movements, that comes naturally, because nothing is more instinctive.

"Poor father!" replied Robert, "ah! How many thanks he will give you, *my lord* , when you have saved him!"

—Do you like him, Robert?

“Yes, *my lord* . He was so good to my sister and me! He thought of nothing but us! Every voyage brought us a souvenir from every country he visited, and even better, warm caresses and kind words upon his return. Ah! You too will love him when you know him! Mary resembles him. He has a voice as gentle as hers! For a sailor, that’s unusual, isn’t it?”

"Yes, very peculiar, Robert," replied Glenarvan.

“I can still see him,” the child continued, seeming to be talking to himself. “Good, brave Papa! He used to lull me to sleep on his knee when I was little, and he always murmured an old Scottish refrain about the lakes of our country. The tune sometimes comes back to me, but

only vaguely. Mary does too. Oh, *my lord* , how we loved him! You see, I think you have to be little to truly love your father!”

"And great to venerate it, my child," replied Glenarvan, deeply moved by the words that escaped from this young heart.

During this conversation, the horses had slowed their pace and were walking at a walk.

"We'll find him, won't we?" said Robert, after a few moments of silence.

"Yes, we will find him," replied Glenarvan. "Thalcave put us on his trail, and I trust him."

"A brave Indian, Thalcave," said the child.

—Certainly.

—Do you know one thing, *my lord* ?

—Speak first, and I will answer you.

—It's because there are only good people with you! Mrs. Helena whom I love so much, the major with his calm air, Captain Mangles, and Mr. Paganel, and the sailors of the *Duncan* , so brave and so devoted!

"Yes, I know that, my boy," replied Glenarvan.

—And do you know that you are the best of all?

—No, for example, I don't know!

"Well, you must learn it, *my lord* ," replied Robert, who took the lord's hand and brought it to his lips.

Glenarvan shook his head gently, and the conversation didn't continue because a gesture from Thalcave called back those who were lagging behind. They had let themselves be overtaken. Now, they couldn't afford to waste any time and had to think of those who were left behind.

They resumed a brisk pace, but it soon became clear that, with the exception of Thaouka, the horses could not maintain it for long. At midday, they had to be given an hour's rest. They were exhausted and refused to eat the tufts of *alfalfa* , a type of lean, sun-baked alfalfa.

Glenarvan became worried. The symptoms of infertility were not diminishing, and the lack of water could lead to disastrous consequences.

Thalcave said nothing, and probably thought that if Guamini was dried up, then it would be time to despair, if indeed an Indian heart had ever heard the hour of despair strike.

So he set off again, and, willingly or unwillingly, with the help of the whip and spur, the horses had to resume their journey, but at a walk, they could do no better.

Thalcave would have been better placed to go ahead, for in a few hours Thaouka could have transported him to the banks of the *river* . He undoubtedly considered this; but, no doubt also, he did not want to leave his two companions alone in the middle of this desert, and, so as

not to overtake them, he forced Thaouka to adopt a more moderate pace.

It was not without resistance, without rearing, without a violent neigh, that Thalcave's horse resigned itself to keeping pace; it took not so much his master's strength to compel him as his words. Thalcave was truly conversing with his horse, and Thaouka, if he didn't answer him, at least understood him. It must be that the Patagonian gave him excellent reasons, for, after "arguing" for some time, Thaouka yielded to his arguments and obeyed, though not without biting his tongue.

But if Thaouka understood Thalcave, Thalcave understood Thaouka no less. The intelligent animal, aided by superior senses, felt some moisture in the air; he inhaled it frantically, flicking and clicking his tongue, as if it had been dipped in a beneficial liquid. The Patagonian could not be mistaken: water was not far away.

He encouraged his companions by interpreting Thaouka's impatience, which the other two horses quickly understood. They made a final effort and galloped after the Indian. Around three o'clock, a white line appeared in a fold of the land. It trembled in the sunlight.

"Water!" said Glenarvan.

"Water! Yes, water!" cried Robert.

They no longer needed to urge on their mounts; the poor beasts, feeling their strength revived, charged forward with irresistible force. In a few minutes, they had reached the *Rio* de Guamini, and, fully harnessed, plunged up to their chests into its life-giving waters.

Their masters imitated them, somewhat against their will, and took an involuntary bath, which they did not think to complain about.

"Ah! How good this is!" said Robert, quenching his thirst in the middle of *the river* .

"Calm yourself down, my boy," replied Glenarvan, who did not preach by example.

All that could be heard was the sound of quick gulps.

For his part, Thalcave drank calmly, without hurrying, in small sips, but "as long as a *lazo* ," according to the Patagonian expression. He seemed to go on forever, and one might have feared that the entire *river would pass through him.*

"Finally," said Glenarvan, "our friends will not be disappointed in their hopes; they are assured, upon arriving at Guamini, of finding clear and abundant water, if Thalcave leaves any, however!"

"But couldn't we go to meet them?" asked Robert. "We would spare them a few hours of worry and suffering."

“No doubt, my boy, but how are we to transport this water? The waterskins are still in Wilson’s possession. No, it’s better to wait as agreed. By calculating the time needed, and counting on horses that only walk at a slow pace, our friends will be here by nightfall. Let us therefore prepare them comfortable lodging and a good meal.”

Thalcave hadn't waited for Glenarvan's suggestion to look for a campsite. He had fortunately found a " *ramada " on the banks of the river* , a kind of enclosure for herding livestock, closed on three sides.

The location was excellent for setting up camp, as long as they weren't afraid of sleeping under the stars, and that was the least of Thalcave's companions' concerns.

So they looked no further, and they lay down in the full sun to dry their waterlogged clothes.

"Well, since we've found the lodging," said Glenarvan, "let's think about supper. Our friends must be satisfied with the couriers they've sent ahead, and I'm quite wrong, or they'll have no cause for complaint. I believe an hour's hunting will be well worth it. Are you ready, Robert?"

"Yes, *my lord* ," replied the young boy, standing up with his rifle in his hand.

If Glenarvan had this idea, it was because the banks of the Guamini seemed to be the meeting place for all the game from the surrounding plains; one saw taking off in companies the "tinamous", a kind of partridge particular to the pampas, black hazel grouse, a species of plover, called "teru-teru", rails with yellow colours, and moorhens of a magnificent green.

As for the four-legged creatures, they remained unseen; but Thalcave, pointing to the tall grass and thickets, made it clear that they were hidden there. The hunters only had to take a few steps to find themselves in the most game-rich country in the world.

So they went hunting, and, initially disdaining feathers for fur, their first shots were aimed at the big game of the pampas.

Soon, hundreds of roe deer and guanacos, like those that had so violently attacked them on the peaks of the Andes, rose up before them;

but these very skittish animals fled with such speed that it was impossible to approach them within rifle range. The hunters then turned to slower game, which, moreover, left nothing to be desired from a food standpoint. A dozen partridges and rails were taken down, and Glenarvan very skillfully killed a tay-tetre peccary, a tawny-haired pachyderm very good to eat, which was well worth the shot.

In less than half an hour, the hunters, without tiring, brought down all the game they needed; Robert, for his part, captured a curious animal belonging to the order Edentata, "an armadillo," a kind of armadillo covered with a shell of movable bony segments, which measured a foot and a half long. As for Thalcave, he treated his companions to the spectacle of a hunt for the "rhendu," a species of ostrich native to the pampas, and whose speed is remarkable.

The Indian didn't try to outwit such a swift animal; he urged Thaouka on at a gallop, straight towards him, so as to catch her immediately, for, had the first attack missed, the rhea would soon tire both horse and hunter in the intricate maze of its twists and turns. Thalcave, having reached a safe distance, hurled his bolas with a vigorous hand, and so skillfully that they wrapped around the ostrich's legs and paralyzed her efforts. In a few seconds, she lay on the ground.

*ramada* brought back the string of partridges, Thalcave's ostrich, Glenarvan's peccary, and Robert's armadillo. The ostrich and the peccary were prepared immediately, that is, their tough skins were removed and they were cut into thin slices. As for the armadillo, it is a precious animal, carrying its own roasting spit, and it was placed in its own shell on hot coals.

For supper, the three hunters were content to devour the partridges, and they saved the main courses for their friends.

The horses had not been forgotten. A large quantity of dry fodder, gathered in the *ramada* , served them both as food and bedding.

When everything was ready, Glenarvan, Robert and the Indian wrapped themselves in their *ponchos* and lay down on an *alfalfa eiderdown* , the usual bed of Pampas hunters.

## Chapter XIX *The Red Wolves*

Night fell. A new moon night, during which the moon was to remain invisible to all the inhabitants of the earth. The dim light of the stars alone illuminated the plain. On the horizon, the zodiac constellations faded into a darker haze. The waters of the Guamini flowed silently like a long sheet of oil gliding over a marble surface. Birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles rested from the day's exertions, and a desert silence spread across the vast expanse of the pampas.

Glenarvan, Robert, and Thalcave had succumbed to the common law. Lying on the thick bed of alfalfa, they slept soundly. The horses, overcome with weariness, had lain down on the ground; only Thaouka, a true thoroughbred, slept standing up, his four legs perfectly upright, proud in rest as in action, and ready to bolt at the slightest sign from his master. Complete calm reigned within the enclosure, and the embers of the night hearth, slowly dying out, cast their last glimmers into the silent darkness.

However, around ten o'clock, after a rather short sleep, the Indian awoke. His eyes became fixed beneath his lowered brows, and his ear

strained towards the plain. He was evidently trying to pick up some imperceptible sound.

Soon a vague worry appeared on her face, which was usually so impassive.

Had he sensed the approach of prowling Indians, or the arrival of jaguars, water tigers and other fearsome beasts, which are not uncommon in the vicinity of rivers? This last hypothesis, no doubt, seemed plausible to him, for he cast a quick glance at the combustible materials piled up in the enclosure, and his anxiety increased even more.

Indeed, all this dry *alfalfa litter* would burn quickly and could not stop bold animals for long.

In this situation, Thalcave had no choice but to wait for events to unfold, and he waited, half-lying down, his head resting on his hands, his elbows pressed against his knees, his eyes motionless, in the posture of a man whom sudden anxiety has just roused from sleep.

An hour passed. Anyone other than Thalcave, reassured by the silence outside, would have gone back to their bed. But where a stranger would have suspected nothing, the heightened senses and natural instinct of the Indian sensed some imminent danger.

While he listened and spied, Thaouka let out a low whinny; his nostrils stretched towards the entrance of the *ramada* . The Patagonian suddenly stood up.

"Thaouka sensed some enemy," he said.

He stood up and came to carefully examine the plain.

Silence still reigned, but not tranquility. Thalcave glimpsed shadows moving silently through the clumps of *curra-mammel* . Here and there, points of light sparkled, crisscrossing in every direction, flickering out and rekindling in turn. It was like a dance of fantastic lanterns on the mirror of a vast lagoon. Some stranger might well have mistaken these flying sparks for the fireflies that shine at night in many places in the Pampas region, but Thalcave was not mistaken; he understood what enemies he was dealing with; he armed his rifle and took up a lookout position near the first posts of the enclosure.

He didn't have to wait long. A strange cry, a mixture of barks and howls, echoed across the pampa. The rifle's shot answered it, followed by a hundred terrifying shouts.

Glenarvan and Robert, suddenly awakened, got up.

"What is it?" asked young Grant.

"Indians?" said Glenarvan.

“No,” replied Thalcave, “aguaras.”

Robert looked at Glenarvan.

"Aguaras *?* " he said.

“Yes,” replied Glenarvan, “the red wolves of the pampas.”

They both seized their weapons and joined the Indian. He showed them the plain, from which a tremendous concert of howls arose.

Robert involuntarily took a step back.

"Aren't you afraid of wolves, my boy?" Glenarvan asked him.

"No, *my lord* ," replied Robert firmly. "Besides, in your presence, I fear nothing."

—So much the better. These *aguaras* are not very fearsome creatures, and, were it not for their number, I wouldn't even worry about them.

"What does it matter!" replied Robert. "We are well armed, let them come!"

"And they will be well received!"

In speaking thus, Glenarvan wanted to reassure the child; but he did not think without a secret terror of that legion of carnivores unleashed in the night. Perhaps there were hundreds of them, and three men, however well armed, could not fight with any advantage against such a number of animals.

When the Patagonian uttered the word "aguara," Glenarvan immediately recognized the name given to the red wolf by the Indians of the pampas. This carnivore, the "canis-jubatus" of naturalists, is the size of a large dog and has the head of a fox; its fur is cinnamon red, and a black mane runs down its back, all the way along its spine. This animal is very agile and very vigorous; it generally inhabits marshy areas and swims after aquatic creatures; at night it is driven from its den, where it sleeps during the day; it is particularly feared on the estancias where herds are kept, because, if hunger spurs it on, it attacks the cattle and causes considerable damage. Isolated, the aguara is not to be feared; But it is otherwise with a large number of these hungry

animals, and it would be better to deal with some cougar or jaguar that one can attack face to face.

From the howls echoing across the pampas, from the multitude of shadows leaping across the plain, Glenarvan could not mistake the number of red wolves gathered on the banks of the Guamini; these animals had sensed a sure prey there, horse or human flesh, and none of them would return to their lair without having had their share. The situation was therefore very alarming.

However, the circle of wolves gradually narrowed. The awakened horses showed signs of intense terror. Only Thaouka stamped his feet, trying to break his halter and ready to bolt. His master could only calm him by making a continuous whistling sound.

Glenarvan and Robert had positioned themselves to defend the entrance to the *ramada* . Their rifles loaded, they were about to fire on the first line of *aguaras* , when Thalcave raised their weapon, already aimed, with his hand.

"What does Thalcave want?" said Robert.

"He forbids us to shoot!" replied Glenarvan.

-For what?

"Perhaps he doesn't judge the timing to be right!"

It was not this motive that made the Indian act, but a more serious reason, and Glenarvan understood it when Thalcave, lifting his powder magazine and turning it over, showed that it was almost empty.

"Well?" said Robert.

"Well, we need to conserve our ammunition. Our hunt today cost us dearly, and we're running low on lead and powder. We don't have twenty shots left!"

The child did not reply.

"Aren't you afraid, Robert?"

—No, *my lord* .

"Good, my boy."

At that moment, a new explosion rang out.

Thalcave had thrown down an overly bold enemy; the wolves, which had been advancing in close ranks, retreated and massed a hundred paces from the enclosure.

Immediately, Glenarvan, at a sign from the Indian, took his place; the latter, gathering the bedding, the grass, in a word all the combustible materials, piled them up at the entrance of the *ramada* , and threw a still incandescent coal into it.

Soon a curtain of flames spread across the black sky, and through its tears, the plain was vividly illuminated by great, shifting reflections. Glenarvan could then judge the countless number of animals he had to resist. Never had so many wolves been seen together, nor so inflamed by lust. The barrier of fire that Thalcave had just erected against them had redoubled their fury by halting them in their tracks.

Some, however, ventured right up to the fire itself, and burned their paws on it.

From time to time, another shot was needed to stop this howling horde, and, after an hour, about fifteen corpses already littered the meadow.

The besieged were then in a relatively less dangerous situation; as long as the ammunition lasted, as long as the barrier of fire stood at the entrance to the *ramada* , an invasion was not to be feared. But afterwards, what would be done, when all these means of repelling the pack of wolves failed at once?

Glenarvan looked at Robert and felt his heart swell. He forgot himself, thinking only of this poor child who displayed courage beyond his years. Robert was pale, but his hand never left his weapon, and he stood firm, awaiting the attack of the enraged wolves.

However, Glenarvan, after coldly considering the situation, resolved to put an end to it.

"In an hour," he said, "we will have neither powder, nor lead, nor fire. Well, we mustn't wait until then to take a stand."

He therefore returned to Thalcave, and gathering the few words of Spanish that his memory provided, he began a conversation with the Indian, often interrupted by gunfire.

It was not without difficulty that these two men managed to understand each other. Glenarvan, fortunately, knew the habits of the red wolf. Without this knowledge, he would not have been able to interpret the Patagonian's words and gestures.

Nevertheless, a quarter of an hour passed before he could transmit Thalcave's reply to Robert.

Glenarvan had questioned the Indian about their almost desperate situation.

"And what did he reply?" asked Robert Grant.

—He said that, whatever the cost, we had to hold out until daybreak. The aguara only comes out at night, and, when morning comes, it returns to its lair. It is the wolf of darkness, a cowardly beast that fears the light of day, a four-legged owl!

—Well, let's defend ourselves until daybreak!

"Yes, my boy, and with knives, when we can no longer do it with guns."

Thalcave had already set the example, and when a wolf approached the fire, the Patagonian's long armed arm would pass through the flame and emerge red with blood.

However, the means of defense were going to be lacking.

Around two o'clock in the morning, Thalcave threw the last armful of fuel into the fire, and the besieged had only five shots left to fire.

Glenarvan cast a sorrowful glance around him.

He thought of the child who was there, of his companions, of all those he loved. Robert said nothing. Perhaps the danger did not appear imminent to his trusting imagination. But Glenarvan thought of it for him, and pictured this horrible, now inevitable, prospect of being devoured alive! He could not control his emotion; he drew the child to his chest, he held him close to his heart, he pressed his lips to his forehead, while involuntary tears streamed from his eyes.

Robert looked at him and smiled.

"I'm not afraid!" he said.

"No! my child, no," replied Glenarvan, "and you are right. In two hours, the day will come, and we will be saved!" "Good, Thalcave, good, my brave Patagonian!" he cried as the Indian killed with blows from his butt two enormous beasts that were trying to cross the burning barrier.

But, at that moment, the dying light of the hearth showed him the band of *aguaras* marching in close ranks to assault the *ramada* .

The denouement of this bloody drama was approaching; the fire was slowly dying down, for lack of fuel; the flame was diminishing; the plain, illuminated until then, was returning to shadow, and in the shadows too reappeared the phosphorescent eyes of the red wolves. A few more minutes, and the entire pack would rush into the enclosure.

Thalcave fired his rifle for the last time, knocked another enemy to the ground, and, his ammunition exhausted, folded his arms. His head bowed to his chest. He seemed to be silently meditating. Was he then seeking some bold, impossible, foolish way to repel this furious troop? Glenarvan dared not ask him.

At that moment, a change occurred in the wolves' attack. They seemed to move away, and their howls, so deafening until then, suddenly ceased. A gloomy silence spread over the plain.

"They're leaving!" said Robert.

"Perhaps," replied Glenarvan, who listened to the sounds outside.

But Thalcave, guessing his thought, shook his head.

He knew full well that the animals would not abandon a sure prey, as long as daylight had not brought them back to their dark dens.

However, the enemy's tactics had obviously changed.

He no longer tried to force the entrance to the *ramada* , but his new maneuvers would create an even more pressing danger. The *aguaras* , abandoning the attempt to penetrate through this entrance which was stubbornly defended with iron and fire, turned the *ramada around* , and in concert they sought to assault it from the opposite side.

Soon their claws could be heard digging into the half-rotten wood. Powerful paws and bloody jaws were already protruding between the shaky posts. The horses, terrified, broke their halters and ran into the enclosure, seized by a wild terror. Glenarvan seized the young child in his arms, determined to defend him to the bitter end. Perhaps he was even about to rush out, attempting an impossible escape, when his gaze fell upon the Indian.

Thalcave, after circling like a wild animal in the *ramada* , suddenly approached his horse, which was trembling with impatience, and began to saddle it carefully, not forgetting a single strap or prong. He no longer seemed concerned by the howls that were now intensifying. Glenarvan watched him with sinister terror.

"He's abandoning us!" he cried, seeing Thalcave gather his guides, like a rider about to mount his horse.

"Him! Never!" said Robert.

And indeed, the Indian was going to try, not to abandon his friends, but to save them by sacrificing himself for them.

Thaouka was ready; he bit his bit; he leaped; his eyes, full of a superb fire, flashed; he had understood his master.

Glenarvan, at the moment when the Indian seized the mane of his horse, grabbed his arm with a convulsive hand.

"Are you leaving?" he said, pointing to the open plain.

"Yes," said the Indian, who understood his companion's gesture.

Then he added a few Spanish words which meant:

“Thaouka! Good horse. Fast. Will lead the wolves after him.”

"Ah! Thalcave!" cried Glenarvan.

"Quickly! Quickly!" replied the Indian, while Glenarvan said to Robert in a voice broken by emotion:

"Robert! My child! Do you hear him? He wants to dedicate himself to us! He wants to rush into the pampas and divert the wolves' rage by drawing it towards himself!"

—Friend Thalcave, replied Robert, throwing himself at the feet of the Patagonian, friend Thalcave, do not leave us!

"No!" said Glenarvan, "he will not leave us."

And turning to the Indian:

"Let's go together," he said, pointing to the terrified horses huddled against the posts.

"No," said the Indian, who did not misunderstand the meaning of these words. "Bad beasts. Frightened. Thaouka. Good horse."

"Very well then!" said Glenarvan. "Thalcave will not leave you, Robert! He is teaching me what I must do! It is I who must leave! It is he who must stay by your side."

Then, seizing Thaouka's bridle:

"It will be me," he said, "who will leave!"

"No," replied the Patagonian calmly.

“I tell you,” cried Glenarvan, snatching the bridle from her hands, “it will be me! Save this child! I entrust him to you, Thalcave!”

However, Thalcave resisted. The discussion dragged on, and the danger grew by the second. Already the gnawed stakes were giving way to the wolves' teeth and claws. Neither Glenarvan nor Thalcave seemed willing to yield. The Indian had led Glenarvan toward the entrance of the enclosure; he showed him the plain, free of wolves; in his animated manner, he made him understand that not a moment should be lost; that the danger, if the maneuver failed, would be greater for those who remained; and finally, that he alone knew Thaouka well enough to employ his marvelous qualities of lightness and speed for the common good. Glenarvan, blinded, remained stubborn and wanted to sacrifice himself, when suddenly he was violently repelled. Thaouka leaped forward; He rose to his hind feet, and suddenly, carried away, he crossed the barrier of fire and the edge of corpses, while a child's voice cried out: "God save you, *my lord* !"

And Glenarvan and Thalcave barely had time to glimpse Robert, who, clinging to Thaouka's mane, disappeared into the darkness.

"Robert! Unfortunate man!" cried Glenarvan.

But the Indian himself could not hear these words. A terrible howl erupted. The red wolves, hot on the horse's trail, fled westward with fantastic speed.

Thalcave and Glenarvan rushed out of the *ramada* . The plain had already regained its tranquility, and they could barely glimpse a moving line undulating in the distance in the shadows of the night.

Glenarvan fell to the ground, overwhelmed and despairing, clasping his hands. He looked at Thalcave. The Indian smiled with his usual calm.

"Thaouka. Good horse! Brave child! He will escape!" he repeated, nodding his head in agreement.

"And if he falls?" said Glenarvan.

"He won't fall!"

Despite Thalcave's confidence, the night ended in terrible anguish for the poor lord. He wanted to run in search of Robert; but the Indian stopped him; he made him understand that the horses could not reach him, that Thaouka must have outrun his enemies, that he could not be found in the darkness, and that they had to wait for daylight to set out in search of Robert.

At four o'clock in the morning, dawn began to break.

The time to leave had arrived.

"Let's go," said the Indian.

Glenarvan didn't reply, but he leaped onto Robert's horse. Soon the two riders were galloping westward, following the straight line from which their companions were not to deviate. For an hour they traveled at a prodigious speed, searching for Robert with their eyes, fearing at every step to encounter his bloodied corpse. Glenarvan was tearing at his horse's flanks with his spur.

Finally, gunshots were heard, detonations regularly spaced like a recognition signal.

"It's them," Glenarvan exclaimed.

He and Thalcave urged their horses on even faster, and a few moments later, they caught up with the detachment led by Paganel. A cry escaped Glenarvan's chest. Robert was there, alive, very much alive, carried by the magnificent Thaouka, who neighed with pleasure at seeing his master again.

"Ah! My child! My child!" cried Glenarvan, with an indescribable expression of tenderness.

And Robert and he, dismounting, rushed into each other's arms. Then it was the Indian's turn to embrace Captain Grant's courageous son.

"He lives! He lives!" cried Glenarvan.

“Yes!” replied Robert, “and thanks to Thaouka!”

The Indian had not waited for this word of gratitude to thank his horse, and, at that moment, he was talking to him, he was kissing him, as if human blood had flowed in the veins of the proud animal.

Then, turning back to Paganel, he pointed out young Robert:

"A brave man!" he said.

However, Glenarvan said to Robert, putting his arms around him:

"Why, my son, why didn't you let Thalcave or me take this last chance to save you?"

“ *My lord* ,” replied the child with the deepest gratitude, “was it not I who should have sacrificed myself? Thalcave has already saved my life! And you, you will save my father.”

## Chapter XX *The Argentine Plains*

After the initial outpouring of water on the return journey, Paganel, Austin, Wilson, Mulrady, and all those who had remained behind, except perhaps Major Mac Nabbs, realized one thing: they were dying of thirst. Fortunately, the Guamini River flowed nearby. So they set off again, and at seven o'clock in the morning the small group arrived near the enclosure. Seeing its approaches littered with the wolves' carcasses, it was easy to understand the ferocity of the attack and the strength of the defense.

Soon the travelers, thoroughly refreshed, indulged in a phenomenal lunch within the *ramada* . The rhea fillets were declared excellent, and the armadillo, roasted in its shell, a delicious dish.

"To eat it in moderation," said Paganel, "would be ungrateful to providence; one must eat too much of it."

And he ate too much of it, and was no worse off for it, thanks to the clear water of the Guamini, which seemed to him to possess digestive qualities of great superiority.

At ten o'clock in the morning, Glenarvan, unwilling to repeat Hannibal's mistakes at Capua, gave the signal to depart. The leather water skins were filled, and they set off. The horses, now well-restored, showed great enthusiasm and maintained a brisk, hunting canter almost the entire time. The more humid land was also becoming more fertile, but still desolate. No incident occurred during the 2nd and 3rd of November, and in the evening, the travelers, already accustomed to the fatigues of long marches, camped at the edge of the pampas, on the border of the province of Buenos Aires. They had left Talcahuano Bay on October 14th; thus, in twenty-two days, four hundred and fifty miles, that is to say, nearly two-thirds of the journey, had been successfully covered.

The following morning, they crossed the conventional line that separates the Argentine plains from the pampas region. It was there that Thalcave hoped to meet the caciques in whose hands he had no doubt he would find Harry Grant and his two fellow slaves.

Of the fourteen provinces that make up the Argentine Republic, Buenos Aires is both the largest and the most populated. Its border borders the southern Indian territories, between the sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth degrees.

Its territory is surprisingly fertile. A particularly healthy climate reigns over this plain covered with grasses and leguminous tree plants, which presents an almost perfect horizontality up to the foot of the Tandil and Tapalquem sierras.

Since leaving Guamini, the travelers had noted, with considerable satisfaction, a marked improvement in the temperature. Its average did not exceed seventeen degrees Celsius, thanks to the violent, cold winds from Patagonia that constantly stirred the atmospheric waves. Animals and people alike had no cause for complaint, having suffered so much from the drought and the heat. They advanced with enthusiasm and confidence. But, whatever Thalcave might have said, the country seemed to be entirely uninhabited, or, to use a more accurate word, "uninhabited."

Often the eastern line ran alongside or cut through small lagoons, sometimes made of fresh water, sometimes of brackish water.

Along the banks, sheltered by bushes, light wrens hopped about and cheerful larks sang, in the company of tanagers, those colorful rivals of the sparkling hummingbirds. These pretty birds beat their wings gaily, heedless of the military starlings parading on the banks with their epaulettes and red breasts. From the thorny bushes swayed, like a Creole hammock, the mobile nests of the annubis, and on the shores of the lagoons, magnificent flamingos, marching in neat flocks, spread their fiery wings in the wind. Their nests, grouped by the thousands, were shaped like truncated cones a foot high, forming something like a small town. The flamingos didn't seem too bothered by the approach of travelers. This didn't sit well with the learned Paganel.

"For a long time," he told the major, "I have been curious to see a flamingo fly.

—Good! said the major.

—Now, since I have the opportunity, I'll take advantage of it.

—Enjoy it, Paganel.

"Come with me, Major. Come too, Robert. I need witnesses."

And Paganel, leaving his companions to walk ahead, headed, followed by Robert Grant and the major, towards the troop of flamingos.

Having reached a safe distance, he fired a shot from his powder rifle, for he would not have shed the blood of a bird unnecessarily, and all the flamingos flew away in unison, while Paganel observed them carefully through his glasses.

"Well," he said to the major when the troop had disappeared, "did you see them flying?"

"Yes, certainly," replied Mac Nabbs, "and, unless one is blind, one could not do less."

—Did you find that when they flew they resembled feathered arrows?

—Not in the least.

"Not at all," added Robert.

“I knew it!” replied the scholar with a satisfied air. “That didn’t stop the proudest of modest men, my illustrious compatriot Chateaubriand, from making that inaccurate comparison between flamingos and

arrows! Ah, Robert, you see, comparison is the most dangerous figure of speech I know. Beware of it all your life, and only use it as a last resort."

"So you are satisfied with your experience?" said the major.

-Delighted.

"And me too; but let's urge our horses on, for your illustrious Chateaubriand has put us a mile behind."

When he rejoined his companions, Paganel found Glenarvan deep in conversation with the Indian, whom he didn't seem to understand. Thalcave had often paused to observe the horizon, and each time his face had expressed rather keen astonishment. Glenarvan, not seeing his usual interpreter beside him, had tried, but in vain, to question the Indian. So, as soon as he could see the scholar, he called out to him:

"Come along then, friend Paganel, Thalcave and I can hardly agree!"

Paganel spoke with the Patagonian for a few minutes, and then turned back to Glenarvan:

"Thalcave," he told him, "is astonished by a fact that is truly bizarre.

-Which?

—It is to encounter neither Indians nor traces of Indians in these plains, which are usually crisscrossed by their bands, whether they are hunting cattle stolen from the estancias, or whether they go as far as the Andes to sell their *zorillo rugs* and their braided leather whips.

—And to what does Thalcave attribute this abandonment?

—He couldn't say; he's just surprised by it, that's all.

—But what kind of Indians did he expect to find in that part of the pampas?

—Precisely those who had foreign prisoners in their hands, those natives commanded by the caciques Calfoucoura, Catriel or Yanchetruz.

—Who are these people?

—Band leaders who were all-powerful some thirty years ago, before they were driven back beyond the mountains. Since then, they have submitted as much as an Indian can submit, and they roam the Pampas plain as well as the province of Buenos Aires. I am therefore surprised, along with Thalcave, not to find any trace of them in a country where they generally work as *salteadores (bullfighters* ).

"But then," asked Glenarvan, "which side should we take?"

"I'll find out," replied Paganel.

And after a few moments of conversation with Thalcave, he said:

"Here is his opinion, which seems very wise to me. We must continue our journey eastward to the strong independence, — that is our path, — and there, if we do not have news of Captain Grant, we will at least know what has become of the Indians of the Argentine plain.

"Is this strong independence far off?" replied Glenarvan.

—No, it is located in the Sierra Tandil, about sixty miles away.

—And will we succeed?…

—The day after tomorrow evening.

Glenarvan was quite disconcerted by this incident. Not finding a single Indian in the pampas was the least one would have expected. There are usually too many of them. Some very special circumstance must have kept them away. But, more importantly, if Harry Grant was a prisoner of one of these tribes, had he been taken north or south? This uncertainty worried Glenarvan. It was crucial to maintain the captain's trail at all costs. Ultimately, the best course of action was to follow Thalcave's advice and reach the village of Tandil. There, at least, they would find someone to talk to.

Around four o'clock in the afternoon, a hill, which could easily be mistaken for a mountain in such a flat landscape, was sighted on the horizon. It was the Sierra Tapalquem, at the foot of which the travelers camped the following night. The crossing of this mountain range the next day proved remarkably easy. They followed the undulating, sandy terrain with its gentle slopes. Such a mountain range could hardly be taken seriously by people who had crossed the Andes, and the horses barely slowed their brisk pace.

At noon, they passed the abandoned fort of Tapalquem, the first link in this chain of forts stretched along the southern edge against the marauding natives. But to Thalcave's growing surprise, they didn't encounter a single Indian. However, around midday, three plains runners, well-mounted and well-armed, observed the small group for a moment; but they wouldn't let them approach and fled with incredible speed. Glenarvan was furious.

"Gauchos," said the Patagonian, giving these natives the name that had led to a discussion between the major and Paganel.

"Ah! Gauchos," replied Mac Nabbs. "Well, Paganel, the north wind isn't blowing today. What do you think of those animals?"

"I think they look like notorious bandits," replied Paganel.

—And from there to being one, my dear scholar?

"It's only one step, my dear major!"

Paganel's confession was followed by general laughter which did not disconcert him, and he even made a very curious observation on the occasion of these Indians.

"I read somewhere," he said, "that the Arab's mouth has a rare expression of ferocity, while human expression is found in the eyes. Well, with the American savage, it's quite the opposite. Those people have particularly vicious eyes."

A professional physiognomist could not have said it better to characterize the Indian race.

However, following Thalcave's orders, they marched in a tight formation; however deserted the country, they had to be wary of surprises; but the precaution proved useless, and that very evening they camped in a vast, abandoned *tolderia* , where Chief Catriel usually gathered his bands of natives. Upon inspecting the ground, and finding no recent tracks, the Patagonian realized that the *tolderia* had not been occupied for long.

The next day, Glenarvan and his companions found themselves on the plain: the first estancias which are near the sierra Tandil were seen; but Thalcave resolved not to stop there and to march straight to the fort of independence, where he wanted to find out, particularly about the singular situation of this abandoned country.

Trees, so rare since the arrival of Europeans in the Andes, reappeared, most of them planted after the Europeans set foot on American soil. There were *azedarachs* , peach trees, poplars, willows, and acacias, growing naturally, quickly, and well. They generally surrounded the corrales, vast cattle pens enclosed by stakes. There, thousands of oxen, sheep, cows, and horses grazed and fattened, branded with the owner's mark, while numerous, large, vigilant dogs kept watch over the surrounding area. The slightly saline soil at the foot of the mountains was ideal for the herds and produced excellent fodder. It was therefore the preferred location for establishing estancias, which were managed by a butler and an overseer, with four peons under their command for every thousand head of cattle.

These people lead the life of the great shepherds of the Bible; their flocks are as numerous, perhaps more numerous, than those that filled the plains of Mesopotamia; but here the shepherd lacks family, and the great "estanceros" of the pampa have all the characteristics of a crude cattle trader, nothing of the patriarch of biblical times.

This is what Paganel explained very well to his companions, and, on this subject, he engaged in a fascinating anthropological discussion on the comparison of races. He even managed to interest the major, who made no secret of it.

Paganel also had the opportunity to point out a curious mirage effect very common in these horizontal plains: the estancias, from a distance, resembled large islands; the poplars and willows on their edge seemed reflected in a limpid water that fled before the steps of travelers; but the illusion was so perfect that the eye could not get used to it.

During this day of November 6, we encountered several estancias, and also one or two saladeros.

This is where the cattle, fattened amidst lush pastures, come to offer their throats to the butcher's knife. The saladero, as its name suggests, is where the meat is salted. These repugnant tasks begin at the end of spring. The "saladeros" then fetch the animals from the corral; they seize them with the *lazo* , which they wield skillfully, and lead them to the saladero; there, oxen, bulls, cows, and sheep are slaughtered by the hundreds, skinned, and skinned. But often the bulls do not allow themselves to be taken without resistance.

The skinner then transforms into a bullfighter, and he performs this perilous task with uncommon skill and, it must be said, ferocity. In short, this butchery presents a dreadful spectacle. Nothing is as repulsive as the surroundings of a saladero; from these horrific enclosures emanate, with an atmosphere thick with fetid emanations, the ferocious cries of skinners, the sinister barking of dogs, the prolonged howls of dying beasts, while urubus and auras, large vultures of the Argentine plains, come by the thousands from twenty leagues around, vying with the butchers for the still-quivering remains of their victims. But at this moment the saladeros were silent, peaceful, and uninhabited.

The time for these immense massacres had not yet come.

Thalcave pressed on; he wanted to reach the Independence Fort that very evening. The horses, urged on by their masters and following Thaouka's example, flew through the tall grasses. They came across several crenellated farms defended by deep ditches; the main house had a terrace from which the inhabitants, organized along military lines, could exchange gunfire with the raiders of the plain. Glenarvan might have found the information he sought there, but the safest course was to reach the village of Tandil. They didn't stop. They forded the *Rio* de los Huesos, and, a few miles further on, the Chapaleofu. Soon the Sierra Tandil offered the horses' feet the grassy slopes of its lower inclines, and, an hour later, the village appeared at the bottom of a narrow gorge, dominated by the crenellated walls of the Independence Fort.

## Chapter XXI *The Strong Independence*

The Sierra Tandil is elevated a thousand feet above sea level; it is a primordial range, that is to say, prior to any organic and metamorphic creation, in the sense that its texture and composition have gradually changed under the influence of internal heat.

It is formed of a semi-circular succession of grass-covered gneiss hills. The district of Tandil, from which it takes its name, comprises the entire southern part of the province of Buenos Aires, and is bordered by a slope that sends the *rivers* originating on its slopes northward.

This district has approximately four thousand inhabitants, and its main town is the village of Tandil, situated at the foot of the northern

slopes of the Sierra, under the protection of Fort Independence; its location is quite advantageous on the important Chapaleofu stream. A singular characteristic, which Paganel could not have been unaware of, is that this village is primarily populated by French Basques and Italian settlers. Indeed, it was France that established the first foreign settlements in this lower part of the Río de la Plata. In 1828, Fort Independence, intended to protect the region against repeated Indian invasions, was built under the supervision of the Frenchman Parchappe. A first-rate scholar assisted him in this undertaking: Alcide d'Orbigny, who best knew, studied, and described all the southern regions of South America.

This village of Tandil is quite an important place. By means of its "galeras," large oxcarts very well suited to following the roads of the plain, it communicates with Buenos Aires in twelve days; from there, a fairly active trade:

The village sends to the city the livestock from its estancias, the salted meats from its saladeros, and the very curious products of the Indian industry, such as cotton fabrics, woolen fabrics, the highly sought-after works of the leather braiders, etc.

Tandil, besides having a number of fairly comfortable houses, also contains schools and churches, for learning in this world and the next.

Paganel, after providing these details, added that information would not be lacking in the village of Tandil; the fort, moreover, was still occupied by a detachment of national troops. Glenarvan therefore had the horses stabled at a rather respectable-looking "fonda" (farmhouse); then Paganel, the major, Robert, and he, under Thalcave's command,

headed towards the Independence Fort. After a few minutes' climb up one of the ridges of the Sierra, they arrived at the postern gate, rather poorly guarded by an Argentine sentry. They passed through without difficulty, which indicated either great negligence or extreme security.

A few soldiers were then practicing on the fort's esplanade; but the oldest of these soldiers was twenty, and the youngest barely seven. In truth, they were a dozen children and young boys, fencing quite neatly. Their uniform consisted of a striped shirt, tied at the waist with a leather belt; trousers, breeches, or a Scottish kilt were out of the question; the mild temperature, moreover, allowed for the relative lightness of this attire. And firstly, Paganel had a good idea of a government that didn't bankrupt itself on rank. Each of these young lads carried a percussion rifle and a saber, the saber too long and the rifle too heavy for the little ones.

They all had dark complexions and a certain family resemblance. The drill corporal who commanded them also looked like them. They must have been, and indeed they were, twelve brothers parading under the orders of the thirteenth.

Paganel was not surprised; he knew his Argentine statistics and was aware that the average number of children in the country exceeded nine per household. But what greatly surprised him was seeing these little ones execute the main movements of the twelve-step charge with perfect precision. Often, the corporal's commands were even given in the learned geographer's native tongue.

"That's unusual," he said.

But Glenarvan hadn't come to the Independence Fort to watch toddlers doing drills, much less to concern himself with their nationality or origins. He didn't give Paganel time to be any more surprised, and asked him to ask for the garrison commander. Paganel complied, and one of the Argentine soldiers headed toward a small house that served as a barracks.

A few moments later, the commander appeared in person. He was a vigorous man of fifty, with a military air, a rough mustache, prominent cheekbones, graying hair, and an imperious gaze—at least as far as one could tell through the swirls of smoke escaping from his short-stemmed pipe. His gait strongly reminded Paganel of the *distinctive bearing* of the old non-commissioned officers in his country.

Thalcave, addressing the commander, introduced Lord Glenarvan and his companions. While he spoke, the commander kept staring at Paganel with a rather embarrassing persistence.

The scholar didn't know where the soldier was going with this, and was about to question him, when the other man took his hand casually and said in a cheerful voice, in the language of the geographer:

"A Frenchman?"

—Yes! A Frenchman! replied Paganel.

—Ah! Pleased to meet you! Welcome! Welcome! I am French too, repeated the commander, shaking the scholar's arm with disturbing vigor.

"One of your friends?" the major asked Paganel.

"Good heavens!" he replied with a certain pride, "we have friends in all five corners of the world."

And after freeing his hand, not without difficulty, from the living vise that was crushing it, he entered into a structured conversation with the vigorous commander.

Glenarvan would have liked to say something related to his business, but the soldier was telling his story and wasn't in the mood to stop mid-conversation. It was clear that this good man had left France long ago; his native tongue was no longer familiar to him, and he had forgotten, if not the words themselves, at least how to put them together. He spoke almost like a Black man from the French colonies. Indeed, as his visitors soon learned, the commander of Fort Indépendance was a French sergeant, a former comrade of Parchappe.

Since the fort's founding in 1828, he had never left it, and he now commanded it with the approval of the Argentine government. He was a fifty-year-old Basque man named Manuel Ipharaguerre. It's clear that, had he not been Spanish, he had a narrow escape. A year after his arrival in the country, Sergeant Manuel became a naturalized citizen, joined the Argentine army, and married a kind Indigenous woman who was then nursing six-month-old twins. Two boys, of course, for the sergeant's worthy wife would not have dared to give him daughters. Manuel could conceive of no other profession than the military, and he fully expected, with time and God's help, to provide the republic with an entire company of young soldiers.

"You see!" he said. "Charming! Good soldiers. José! Juan!
Miquele! Pepe! Pepe, seven years old! is already chewing his cartridge!"

Pepe, hearing himself complimented, gathered his two little feet and presented arms with perfect grace.

"He'll be fine!" added the sergeant. "One day, colonel major or brigadier general!"

Sergeant Manuel was so delighted that there was no point in contradicting him on the superiority of the military profession, nor on the future reserved for his belligerent offspring. He was happy, and, as Goethe said: "Nothing that makes us happy is an illusion."

This whole affair lasted a good fifteen minutes, much to Thalcave's astonishment. The Indian couldn't understand how so many words could come from a single throat. No one interrupted the commander.

But since even a French sergeant, like any other, must eventually fall silent, Manuel finally did, but not before forcing his guests to follow him into his home. They resigned themselves to being introduced to Madame Ipharaguerre, who seemed to them to be "a good person," if such an old-fashioned expression can even be used to describe an Indian woman.

Then, when all his wishes had been granted, the sergeant asked his hosts what he felt was the honor of their visit. It was now or never to explain. Paganel recounted his entire journey across the pampas in French and concluded by asking why the Indians had abandoned the country.

"Ah!… Nobody!…" replied the sergeant, shrugging his shoulders. "Indeed!… Nobody!… We, with our arms crossed… Nothing to be done!"

—But why?

-War.

-War?

—Yes! Civil war…

"Civil war?..." Paganel resumed, who, without realizing it, was starting to "speak Negro."

"Yes, a war between Paraguayans and Buenos Aires," replied the sergeant.

-Well?

—Well, Indians all in the north, on General Flores's tail. Raider Indians, they're raiding.

—But what about the chieftains?

—Caciques with them.

—What! Catriel.

—No Catriel.

—And Calfoucoura?

—Calfoucoura point.

—And Yanchetruz?

—No more Yanchetruz!

This reply was reported to Thalcave, who shook his head approvingly. Indeed, Thalcave was either unaware or had forgotten that a civil war,

which would later lead to Brazil's intervention, was decimating both parties of the republic.

The Indians had everything to gain from these internal struggles, and they couldn't pass up such excellent opportunities for plunder. Therefore, the sergeant was not mistaken in attributing the abandonment of the pampas to the civil war taking place in the northern Argentine provinces.

But this event thwarted Glenarvan's plans, whose schemes were thus foiled. Indeed, if Harry Grant was a prisoner of the chieftains, he must have been taken with them to the northern borders.

So where and how could they find him? Was it necessary to attempt a perilous, and almost futile, search all the way to the northernmost reaches of the pampas?

It was a serious resolution, which needed to be seriously debated.

However, one important question could still be asked of the sergeant, and it was the major who thought of asking it while his friends looked at each other in silence.

"Had the sergeant heard that Europeans were being held prisoner by the chieftains of the pampas?"

Manuel reflected for a few moments, like a man who calls upon his memories.

"Yes," he finally said.

"Ah!" said Glenarvan, clinging to a new hope.

Paganel, Mac Nabbs, Robert and he surrounded the sergeant.

"Speak! Speak!" they said, eyeing him greedily.

"A few years ago," replied Manuel, "yes... That's right... European prisoners... But never seen..."

"A few years," Glenarvan continued, "you are mistaken... The date of the shipwreck is precise... The *Britannia* was lost in June 1862... So it was less than two years ago."

—Oh! More than that, *my lord* .

"Impossible," cried Paganel.

—Yes, really! It was at Pepe's birth… It involved two men.

—No, three! said Glenarvan.

"Two!" replied the sergeant affirmatively.

"Two!" said Glenarvan, very surprised. "Two Englishmen?"

"No," replied the sergeant. "Who speaks English? No… A Frenchman and an Italian."

"An Italian who was massacred by the Poyuches?" exclaimed Paganel.

—Yes! And I've learned since then… French saved.

"Saved!" cried young Robert, whose life hung on the sergeant's lips.

"Yes, saved from the hands of the Indians," replied Manuel.

Everyone was looking at the scholar, who was hitting his forehead with a despairing expression.

"Ah! I understand," he said finally, "everything is clear, everything is explained!"

"But what is this about?" asked Glenarvan, as worried as he was impatient.

“My friends,” replied Paganel, taking Robert’s hands, “we must resign ourselves to a grave disappointment! We have followed a false trail! This is not about the captain, but about one of my compatriots, whose companion, Marco Vazello, was indeed murdered by the Poyuches, a Frenchman who several times accompanied these cruel Indians to the banks of the Colorado River, and who, after fortunately escaping their grasp, returned to France. Believing we were following in Harry Grant’s footsteps, we have stumbled upon those of young Guinnard.”

A profound silence greeted this statement.

The mistake was palpable. The details given by the sergeant, the nationality of the prisoner, the murder of his companion, his escape from the hands of the Indians, everything conspired to make it obvious.

Glenarvan looked at Thalcave with a bewildered expression. The Indian then spoke:

"Have you never heard of three captive Englishmen?" he asked the French sergeant.

“Never,” replied Manuel… “We would have learned it in Tandil… I would know… No, that’s not…”

Glenarvan, after this formal reply, had no business remaining at the independent stronghold. He and his friends therefore withdrew, but not before thanking the sergeant and exchanging a few handshakes with him.

Glenarvan was devastated by this complete reversal of his hopes. Robert walked beside him without saying a word, his eyes wet with tears.

Glenarvan couldn't find a single word to console him. Paganel gestured wildly, talking to himself. The major didn't utter a word. As for Thalcave, he seemed wounded in his Indian pride at having gone astray on a false trail. No one, however, thought to reproach him for such an excusable error.

We returned to the fonda.

Supper was a somber affair. Certainly, none of these courageous and devoted men regretted so much needlessly endured hardship, so many vainly incurred dangers. But each saw all hope of success vanish in an instant. Indeed, could Captain Grant be encountered between the Sierra Tandil and the sea? No. Sergeant Manuel, if any prisoner had fallen into the hands of the Indians on the Atlantic coast, would certainly have been informed. An event of this nature could not escape the attention of the natives who conduct regular trade from Tandil to Carmen, at the mouth of the *Rio* Negro. Now, among traders of the Argentine plain, everything is known, and everything is said. There was therefore only one course of action left: to rejoin, without delay, the *Duncan* at the appointed rendezvous point at Punta Medano.

However, Paganel had asked Glenarvan for the document on which their research had so unfortunately gone astray. He reread it with barely concealed anger. He was trying to wrest a new interpretation from him.

"This document is quite clear!" Glenarvan repeated. "It explains in the most categorical manner the shipwreck of the captain and the place of his captivity!"

“Well, no!” replied the geographer, slamming his fist on the table, “a hundred times no! Since Harry Grant isn’t in the pampas, he isn’t in America. Now, where he is, this document must tell you, and it will, my friends, or I’m no longer Jacques Paganel!”

## Chapter XXII *The Flood*

A distance of one hundred and fifty miles separates the independent stronghold from the shores of the Atlantic.

Barring unforeseen, and certainly improbable, delays, Glenarvan should have reached the *Duncan in four days* . But returning on board without Captain Grant, after his search had so utterly failed, was an idea he couldn't bear. Therefore, the next day, he didn't even think to give his orders for departure. It was the major who took it upon himself to saddle the horses, replenish the provisions, and draw up the route bearings. Thanks to his diligence, the small group descended the grassy slopes of the Sierra Tandil at eight o'clock in the morning.

Glenarvan, with Robert at his side, galloped on without a word; his bold and resolute nature prevented him from accepting this failure with a tranquil soul; his heart pounded as if it were about to burst, and his

head was on fire. Paganel, irritated by the difficulty, turned the words of the document over and over in every way to extract a new lesson from it.

Thalcave, mute, left Thaouka to guide him. The major, ever confident, remained steadfast at his post, like a man untouched by discouragement. Tom Austin and his two sailors shared their master's boredom. At one point, when a timid rabbit crossed the mountain paths in front of them, the superstitious Scots exchanged glances.

"A bad omen," said Wilson.

"Yes, in the Highlands," replied Mulrady.

"What is bad in the Highlands is no better here," replied Wilson sententiously.

Around midday, the travelers had crossed the Sierra Tandil and were once again on the gently rolling plains that stretch to the sea. At every step, clear *rivers* watered this fertile land and disappeared amidst the high pastures. The ground regained its normal horizontality, like the ocean after a storm. The last mountains of the Argentine Pampas were behind them, and the monotonous prairie offered its long carpet of green to the horses' hooves.

The weather had been fine until then. But that day, the sky took on a rather ominous aspect. The masses of vapor, generated by the high temperatures of the preceding days and arranged in thick clouds, promised to unleash torrential rain. Moreover, the proximity of the Atlantic and the prevailing westerly wind there made the climate of this region particularly humid. This was evident in its fertility, the lush

abundance of its pastures, and their somber greenness. However, at least that day, the broad clouds did not break, and in the evening, the horses, after cheerfully covering a forty-mile load, stopped at the edge of deep "canadas," immense natural ditches filled with water. There was no shelter whatsoever. *Ponchos* served as both tents and blankets, and everyone fell asleep under a threatening sky, which, fortunately, remained just that—a threat.

The next day, as the plain sloped down, the presence of groundwater became even more evident; moisture seeped from every pore of the soil. Soon, large pools, some already deep, others just beginning to form, blocked the eastern route. As long as these were only "lagunas," well-defined pools of water free of aquatic plants, the horses could easily manage; but with these shifting muds, called "penganos," it was more difficult; tall grasses blocked them, and to recognize the danger, one had to be caught in them.

These quagmires had already proven fatal to more than one living being. Indeed, Robert, who had gone ahead for half a mile, came galloping back and cried out:

"Mr. Paganel! Mr. Paganel! A forest of horns!"

—What! replied the scholar, you found a forest of horns?

—Yes, yes, at least a thicket.

"A thicket! You're dreaming, my boy," replied Paganel, shrugging his shoulders.

“I’m not dreaming,” Robert replied, “and you’ll see for yourself! What a strange country! They sow horns there, and they grow like wheat! I’d

love to have some of that seed!”

"But he's serious," said the major.

"Yes, sir, you'll see."

Robert had not been mistaken, and soon we found ourselves before an immense field of horns, regularly planted, which stretched as far as the eye could see. It was a veritable thicket, low and dense, but strange.

"Well?" said Robert.

"That's unusual," replied Paganel, turning to the Indian and questioning him.

"The horns are coming out of the ground," said Thalcave, "but the oxen are underneath."

"What!" cried Paganel, "there's a whole herd stuck in this mud?"

"Yes," said the Patagonian.

Indeed, an immense herd had perished beneath the ground shaken by its charge; hundreds of oxen had just died, side by side, suffocated in the vast quagmire. This event, which sometimes occurs on the Argentinian plain, could not have escaped the notice of the Indian, and it was a warning that should be heeded. The immense carnage, which would have satisfied the most demanding gods of antiquity, was circumvented, and an hour later, the field of horns remained two miles behind.

Thalcave observed with some anxiety this state of affairs which did not seem ordinary to him.

He often stopped and rose in his stirrups. His great height allowed him to take in a vast horizon; but, seeing nothing to enlighten him, he soon resumed his interrupted march. A mile further on, he would stop again, then, deviating from the established route, he would make a foray of a few miles, sometimes north, sometimes south, and return to the head of the troop, without saying either what he hoped for or what he feared. This maneuver, repeated many times, intrigued Paganel and worried Glenarvan.

The scholar was therefore invited to question the Indian.

Which he did immediately.

Thalcave replied that he was surprised to see the plain so waterlogged. Never, to his knowledge, in all his years as a guide, had his feet trod such soggy ground. Even during the heavy rainy season, the Argentine countryside always offered passable routes.

"But to what can we attribute this increasing humidity?" asked Paganel.

"I don't know," replied the Indian, "and when would I know!"

—Do the *rivers* in the mountains, swollen by the rains, never overflow?

-Sometimes.

—And now, perhaps?

"Perhaps!" said Thalcave.

Paganel had to be content with this half-answer, and he informed Glenarvan of the result of his conversation.

"And what does Thalcave advise?" said Glenarvan.

"What is there to be done?" Paganel asked the Patagonian.

"Walk fast," replied the Indian.

Easier said than done. The horses quickly tired from treading on ground that gave way beneath them, the depression deepened, and this part of the plain resembled a vast depression where the encroaching waters would rapidly accumulate. It was therefore crucial to cross these lower-lying areas without delay, as a flood would have instantly transformed them into a lake.

They quickened their pace. But the water cascading in sheets beneath the horses' hooves wasn't enough. Around two o'clock, the heavens opened, and torrents of tropical rain plunged down onto the plain. Never had there been a better opportunity to be philosophical.

There was no way to escape this deluge, and it was better to receive it stoically. The *ponchos* were dripping wet; the hats drenched them like a roof with clogged gutters; the fringe of the *recados* seemed made of liquid nets, and the riders, splashed by their mounts whose hooves struck the torrents of the ground at every step, rode in a double downpour that came from both earth and sky.

And so it was that, soaked, chilled, and utterly exhausted, they arrived that evening at a truly wretched ranch. Only undemanding people would call it a shelter, and desperate travelers would agree to take refuge there. But Glenarvan and his companions had no choice. So they

huddled in this abandoned shack, the kind a poor pampas Indian wouldn't have wanted.

A poor grass fire, producing more smoke than heat, was lit with some difficulty. Gusts of rain raged outside, and large drops seeped through the rotting thatch. If the fire didn't go out twenty times, it was because Mulrady and Wilson battled the encroaching water twenty times. The supper, very meager and unrefreshing, was rather dismal.

Appetite was lacking. Only the major did justice to the damp *meat* and didn't waste a single bite.

The impassive Mac Nabbs was above the events. As for Paganel, being French, he tried to joke. But it fell flat.

"My jokes are lame," he said, "they fall flat!"

However, since the most pleasant thing in this situation was to sleep, everyone sought in sleep a momentary forgetting of their fatigues. The night was bad; the planks of the rancho creaked as if they were about to break; it swayed in the wind and threatened to be blown away with every gust; the poor horses groaned outside, exposed to the full inclement of heaven, and their masters suffered no less in their wretched hovel. Nevertheless, sleep finally prevailed. Robert was the first, closing his eyes and resting his head on Lord Glenarvan's shoulder, and soon all the ranch's guests were sleeping soundly under God's protection.

It seems God kept a good watch, for the night ended without incident. They awoke to Thaouka's call; ever watchful, he neighed outside and pounded his strong hoof against the hut wall. In Thalcave's absence, he

knew when necessary to give the signal to leave. They owed him too much not to obey, and so they departed. The rain had subsided, but the impermeable ground retained the spilled water; on its waterproof clay, puddles, marshes, and ponds overflowed, forming immense, treacherously deep pools. Paganel, consulting his map, reasoned, not without reason, that the *Rio* Grande and Rio Vivarota, into which the waters of this plain usually drain, must have merged into a channel several miles wide.

An extremely fast pace of marching then became necessary. It was a matter of common survival. If the flood rose, where could they find shelter?

The immense circle traced by the horizon did not offer a single high point, and on this horizontal plain the flooding of the waters must have been rapid.

The horses were therefore pushed to their full speed.

Thaouka held the lead, and, better than some amphibians with powerful fins, he deserved the name of sea horse, for he leaped as if he were in his natural element.

Suddenly, around ten o'clock in the morning, Thaouka showed signs of extreme agitation. He frequently turned towards the vast expanses of the south; his neighing grew longer and longer; his nostrils inhaled the crisp air. He reared violently. Thalcave, whom his leaps could not unseat, could not restrain him without difficulty. The foam at his mouth mingled with blood under the pressure of the tightly tightened bit, and yet the fiery animal did not calm down; free, his master could well see that he would have fled northward with all the speed of his legs.

"What's wrong with Thaouka?" asked Paganel; "has he been bitten by the voracious leeches of the silver waters?"

"No," replied the Indian.

—So he's afraid of some danger?

—Yes, he sensed the danger.

-Which?

"I don't know."

If the eye had not yet revealed the peril that Thaouka sensed, the ear, at least, could already perceive it. Indeed, a muffled murmur, like the sound of a rising tide, could be heard beyond the horizon. The wind blew in damp gusts laden with watery dust; birds, fleeing some unknown phenomenon, crossed the air at full speed; horses, immersed up to their mid-calf, felt the first surges of the current. Soon a tremendous noise, bellowing, neighing, and bleating resounded half a mile to the south, and immense herds appeared, which, overturning, rising, and rushing about, an incoherent mixture of terrified beasts, fled with frightful speed.

It was barely possible to distinguish them amidst the swirling waters they churned up in their course. A hundred of the largest whales could not have violently pushed back the ocean waves.

" *Anda, anda!"* cried Thalcave in a bright voice.

"What is it then?" said Paganel.

—The flood! The flood! replied Thalcave, spurring his horse and sending it off in the direction of the north.

"The flood!" cried Paganel, and his companions, with him at their head, flew after Thaouka.

It was high time. Indeed, five miles to the south, a high and wide tidal bore was rushing down onto the countryside, which was transforming into an ocean. The tall grasses were disappearing as if mowed down. Clumps of mimosa, torn up by the current, drifted and formed floating islets. The mass of water cascaded in thick sheets of irresistible force. There had clearly been a bursting of the *floodplains* of the great rivers of Pampas, and perhaps the waters of the Colorado to the north and the *Rio* Negro to the south were now meeting in a common channel.

The sandbar Thalcave had signaled was approaching with the speed of a racehorse. The travelers fled before it like a cloud driven by a storm wind. Their eyes searched in vain for a place of refuge. Sky and water merged on the horizon. The horses, roused by the danger, bolted into a wild gallop, and their riders could barely stay in the saddle.

Glenarvan often looked back.

"The water is engulfing us," he thought.

—Anda *, anda!* » shouted Thalcave.

And they were still pressing the unfortunate animals.

From their flanks, furrowed by the spur, flowed bright blood that traced long red rivulets on the water. They stumbled in the crevices of the ground.

They became entangled in the hidden reeds. They fell. They were helped up. They fell again. They were helped up again. The water level was rising noticeably. Long undulations heralded the onslaught of the sandbar, which, less than two miles away, churned its foaming crest. For a quarter of an hour, this supreme struggle against the most terrible of elements continued. The fugitives had not been able to realize the distance they had just covered, but, judging by the speed of their journey, it must have been considerable. However, the horses, drowned up to their chests, could now only advance with extreme difficulty. Glenarvan, Paganel, Austin—all believed themselves lost and doomed to that horrible death of unfortunate souls abandoned at sea. Their mounts were beginning to lose their footing on the plain, and six feet of water would have been enough to drown them. We must abandon any attempt to depict the poignant anguish of these eight men overwhelmed by a rising tide. They felt their powerlessness to fight against these natural cataclysms, which were beyond human strength. Their salvation was no longer in their own hands.

Five minutes later, the horses were swimming; the current alone carried them along with incomparable violence and a speed equal to that of their fastest gallop, which must have exceeded twenty miles per hour.

All salvation seemed impossible, when the major's voice was heard.

"A tree," he said.

"A tree?" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"There, there!" replied Thalcave.

And, with his finger, he pointed out, eight hundred fathoms to the north, a kind of gigantic walnut tree that rose solitarily from the middle of the waters.

His companions didn't need to be excited. This tree, which had so unexpectedly presented itself to them, had to be reached at all costs. The horses probably wouldn't be able to reach it, but the men, at least, could be saved. The current was carrying them. At that moment, Tom Austin's horse let out a muffled whinny and disappeared.

His master, freed from his stirrups, began to swim vigorously.

"Hold on to my saddle," Glenarvan shouted at him.

"Thank you, Your Honor," replied Tom Austin, "the arms are strong."

"Your horse, Robert?" Glenarvan continued, turning to young Grant.

—He's going, *my lord* ! He's going! He's swimming like a fish!

"Watch out!" said the major in a loud voice.

The word was scarcely uttered when the enormous tidal bore arrived. A monstrous wave, forty feet high, crashed over the fugitives with a terrifying roar. Men and beasts alike vanished in a swirling vortex of foam. A liquid mass weighing several million tons tossed them about in its furious waters. When the bar had been crossed, the men returned to the surface and quickly counted themselves; but the horses, except for Thaouka carrying his master, had disappeared forever.

"Courage! Courage!" repeated Glenarvan, who was supporting Paganel with one arm and swimming with the other.

"It's fine! It's fine!…" replied the worthy scholar, "and indeed, I'm not angry…"

What wasn't he angry about? No one ever knew, for the poor man was forced to swallow the end of his sentence with half a pint of muddy water. The major advanced calmly, drawing a steady glass that a lifeguard wouldn't have disowned.

The sailors slipped through the water like two porpoises in their liquid element. As for Robert, clinging to Thaouka's mane, he let himself be carried along with him. Thaouka sliced through the water with superb energy, instinctively staying in line with the tree where the current was carrying him.

The tree was now only twenty fathoms away. In a few moments, it was reached by the entire troop.

Fortunately, because, having failed to find refuge, all chance of salvation vanished, and they would have had to perish in the waves.

The water rose to the top of the trunk, to the point where the parent branches originated.

It was therefore easy to grab hold. Thalcave, abandoning his horse and hauling Robert up, climbed first, and soon his powerful arms had brought the exhausted swimmers to safety. But Thaouka, carried away by the current, was quickly drifting out.

He turned his intelligent head towards his master, and, shaking his long mane, he called to him with a neigh.

“You’re abandoning him! said Paganel to Thalcave.

"Me!" cried the Indian.

And, plunging into the torrential waters, he reappeared ten fathoms from the tree. A few moments later, his arm rested on Thaouka's neck, and horse and rider drifted together towards the misty northern horizon.

## Chapter XXIII *Where the Life of Birds is Led*

The tree in which Glenarvan and his companions had just found refuge resembled a walnut tree.

It had glossy foliage and a rounded shape.

In reality, it was the "ombu," which is found only in isolated patches on the Argentinian plains. This tree, with its gnarled and enormous trunk, is anchored to the ground not only by its large roots, but also by vigorous shoots that cling to it tenaciously. Thus, it had withstood the onslaught of the tidal bore.

This *ombu tree* was about a hundred feet tall and could cover a circumference of sixty fathoms with its shade. The entire structure rested on three large branches that trifurcated at the top of the six-foot-wide trunk. Two of these branches rose almost perpendicularly and supported the immense canopy of foliage, whose crossed, intertwined, and entangled branches, as if woven by a basket maker's hand, formed an impenetrable shelter.

The third branch, on the contrary, stretched almost horizontally above the roaring waters; its lower leaves were already bathed in them; it resembled an advanced promontory of this verdant island

surrounded by an ocean. There was no shortage of space within this gigantic tree; the foliage, pushed back to the circumference, left large, wide-open spaces, veritable clearings, abundant air, and coolness everywhere. Seeing these branches raise their countless twigs to the clouds, while parasitic vines bound them together, and rays of sunlight slipped through the gaps in the foliage, one would truly have thought that the trunk of this *ombu tree* alone supported an entire forest.

Upon the arrival of the fugitives, a winged world fled up into the high branches, protesting with its cries against such a blatant usurpation of their home.

These birds, who had also sought refuge on this solitary *ombu* , were there by the hundreds: blackbirds, starlings, *isacas* , *hilgueros* , and especially *picaflors* , hummingbirds with resplendent colors; and when they flew away, it seemed as if a gust of wind stripped the tree of all its flowers.

Such was the refuge offered to Glenarvan's small band. Young Grant and nimble Wilson, barely perched in the tree, hastened to climb to its upper branches. Their heads then pierced the canopy of greenery. From this vantage point, the view encompassed a vast horizon. The ocean created by the flood surrounded them on all sides, and no matter how far their gaze stretched, it could not discern its limit. No tree rose above the liquid plain; the *ombu* , alone amidst the overflowing waters, trembled at their impact. In the distance, drifting from south to north, carried by the impetuous current, passed uprooted trunks, twisted branches, stubble torn from some demolished rancho, beams of sheds stolen by the waters from the roofs of estancias, carcasses of drowned

animals, bloody hides, and on a swaying tree a whole family of roaring jaguars clinging with their claws to their fragile raft.

Further on, a black dot, almost invisible already, caught Wilson's attention. It was Thalcave and his faithful Thaouka, disappearing into the distance.

"Thalcave, friend Thalcave!" cried Robert, extending his hand towards the courageous Patagonian.

"He will escape, Mr. Robert," replied Wilson; "but let us go and restore his honor."

A moment later, Robert Grant and the sailor descended the three tiers of branches and found themselves at the top of the trunk. There, Glenarvan, Paganel, the major, Austin, and Mulrady were seated, either astride or clinging, according to their natural abilities. Wilson reported on his visit to the *ombu 's summit* . All shared his opinion of Thalcave. The only question of doubt was whether Thalcave would save Thaouka, or Thaouka would save Thalcave. The situation of the *ombu 's inhabitants* was, without question, far more alarming. The tree would probably not yield to the force of the current, but the rising floodwaters could reach its upper branches, for the depression in the ground made this part of the plain a deep reservoir.

Glenarvan's first task was therefore to establish, by means of notches, reference points that would allow observation of the various water levels.

The flood, which had stabilized, appeared to have reached its highest point. That was already reassuring.

"And now, what are we going to do?" said Glenarvan.

"Let's make our nest, by Jove!" replied Paganel cheerfully.

"Let's make our nest!" cried Robert.

—No doubt, my boy, and live the life of birds, since we cannot live the life of fish.

"Good!" said Glenarvan, "but who will feed us?"

"Me," replied the major.

All eyes turned to Mac Nabbs; the major was comfortably seated in a natural armchair formed of two elastic branches, and with one hand he held out his wet, but bouncy, alforjas.

“Ah! Mac Nabbs,” exclaimed Glenarvan, “I recognize you well! You think of everything, even in circumstances where it is permissible to forget everything.”

"As long as we were determined not to drown," replied the major, "it wasn't with the intention of dying of hunger!"

"I would have thought of that," said Paganel naively, "but I am so distracted!"

"And what do the alforjas contain?" asked Tom Austin.

—Fuel for seven men for two days, replied Mac
Nabbs.

"Well," said Glenarvan, "I hope the flood will have subsided sufficiently within twenty-four hours."

"Or that we will have found a way to return to dry land," replied Paganel.

"Our first duty, therefore, is to have lunch," said Glenarvan.

"After we have dried ourselves off, however," the major observed.

"And fire?" said Wilson.

—Well then! We must do it, replied Paganel.

-Or?

—At the top of the trunk, by Jove!

—With what?

—With dead wood that we will go and cut from the tree.

"But how do we light it?" said Glenarvan. "Our tinder looks like a wet sponge!"

"We'll do without it!" replied Paganel; "a bit of dry moss, a ray of sunshine, the lens of my spyglass, and you'll see what kind of fire I burn. Who's going to fetch wood from the forest?"

"Me!" Robert exclaimed.

And, followed by his friend Wilson, he disappeared like a young cat into the depths of the tree. During their absence, Paganel found a sufficient quantity of dry moss; he obtained a ray of sunlight, which was easy, for the sun was then shining brightly; then, with the help of his lens, he easily lit the kindling, which was placed on a layer of damp leaves at the junction of the large branches of the *ombu tree* . It was a

natural hearth that presented no danger of fire. Soon Wilson and Robert returned with an armful of dead wood, which was thrown onto the moss. To determine the draft, Paganel positioned himself above the hearth, his two long legs spread apart, in the Arab manner; then, bending down and rising up with a rapid movement, he used his *poncho to create* a strong draft.

The wood caught fire, and soon a beautiful, roaring flame rose from the makeshift brazier. Everyone dried themselves as they pleased, while the *ponchos* hanging from the tree swayed in the breeze; then they ate lunch, rationing their portions, for they had to think about the next day; the immense basin might not empty as quickly as Glenarvan had hoped, and, all in all, their provisions were quite limited. The *ombu tree* produced no fruit; fortunately, it could offer a remarkable supply of fresh eggs, thanks to the numerous nests that grew on its branches, not to mention their feathered inhabitants.

These resources were by no means to be disregarded.

So now, in anticipation of a prolonged stay, it was necessary to arrange for a comfortable setup.

“Since the kitchen and dining room are on the ground floor,” said Paganel, “we will sleep on the first floor; the house is spacious; the rent is cheap; we shouldn’t be shy. I can see natural cradles up there in which, once we are securely tied down, we will sleep as if in the best beds in the world. We have nothing to fear; besides, we will be watched, and there are enough of us to repel fleets of Indians and other animals.”

"All we lack are weapons," said Tom Austin.

“I have my revolvers,” said Glenarvan.

"And I have my own," replied Robert.

"What's the point," continued Tom Austin, "if Mr. Paganel can't find a way to manufacture the gunpowder?"

"It's useless," replied Mac Nabbs, pointing to a powder magazine in perfect condition.

"And where did it come from, Major?" asked Paganel.

—From Thalcave. He thought it might be useful to us, and he gave it to me before rushing to Thaouka's aid.

"Generous and brave Indian!" cried Glenarvan.

"Yes," replied Tom Austin, "if all Patagonians are cut from this cloth, I pay my respects to Patagonia."

"I ask that we not forget the horse!" said Paganel. "It is part of the Patagon, and I am very much mistaken, or we will see them again, one carrying the other."

"How far are we from the Atlantic?" asked the major.

“At most forty miles,” replied Paganel. “And now, my friends, since everyone is free to do as they please, I ask your permission to leave you; I am going to choose an observatory up there, and, with the help of my spyglass, I will keep you informed of the affairs of this world.”

The scholar was left to his own devices, and with great skill, he climbed from branch to branch and disappeared behind the thick

curtain of foliage. His companions then set about organizing their sleeping arrangements and preparing their beds. This was neither difficult nor time-consuming.

No blankets to make, no furniture to put away, and soon everyone was back in their places around the brazier. They talked then, but no longer about the present situation, which they had to bear with patience. They returned to that inexhaustible theme of Captain Grant. If the waters receded, the *Duncan* would see the travelers back on board within three days. But Harry Grant, his two sailors, those unfortunate castaways, would not be with them. It even seemed, after this failure, after this futile voyage across America, that all hope of finding them was irrevocably lost. Where to direct a new search? How great would be the grief of Lady Helena and Mary Grant upon learning that the future held no more hope for them!

"Poor sister!" said Robert, "it's all over for us!"

For the first time, Glenarvan couldn't find a single comforting word to reply. What hope could he offer the young child? Hadn't he followed the document's instructions with rigorous accuracy?

"And yet," he said, "this thirty-seventh degree of latitude is not a meaningless number! Whether it applies to the shipwreck or the captivity of Harry Grant, it is not assumed, interpreted, or guessed! We have read it with our own eyes!"

"All that is true, Your Honor," replied Tom Austin, "and yet our searches have been unsuccessful."

"It's irritating and hopeless at the same time," Glenarvan exclaimed.

"Irritating, if you will," replied Mac Nabbs calmly, "but not despairing. It is precisely because we have an indisputable figure that we must exhaust all its teachings."

"What do you mean," asked Glenarvan, "and, in your opinion, what can still be done?"

—A very simple and logical thing, my dear Edward. Let us set a course to the east, when we are on board the *Duncan* , and follow this thirty-seventh parallel back to our starting point, if necessary.

"Do you really think, Mac Nabbs, that I haven't considered it?" replied Glenarvan. "Yes! A hundred times! But what chance do we have of succeeding? Leaving the American continent, isn't that moving away from the place indicated by Harry Grant himself, from that Patagonia so clearly named in the document?"

"Do you want to resume your search in the pampas," replied the major, "when you are certain that the sinking of the *Britannia* did not occur on the Pacific or Atlantic coasts?"

Glenarvan did not reply.

"And however slim the chance of finding Harry Grant by following the parallel he indicated, shouldn't we try it?"

"I'm not saying no..." Glenarvan replied.

"And you, my friends," added the major, addressing the sailors, "do you not share my opinion?"

"Completely," replied Tom Austin, which Mulrady and Wilson approved with a nod.

“Listen to me, my friends,” Glenarvan resumed after a few moments of reflection, “and hear me clearly, Robert, for this is a serious matter. I will do everything in the world to find Captain Grant, I have pledged myself to do so, and I will dedicate my entire life to it, if need be. All of Scotland would join me in saving this kind-hearted man who has devoted himself to her. I, too, believe that, however slim the chance, we must circumnavigate the globe along this thirty-seventh parallel, and I will. But the question to be resolved is not that. It is far more important, and it is this: must we abandon, definitively and immediately, our search on the American continent?”

The question, categorically posed, remained unanswered. No one dared to speak out.

"Well!" Glenarvan continued, addressing himself more specifically to the major.

“My dear Edward,” replied Mac Nabbs, “it is a rather great responsibility to answer you *here and now* . It requires some thought.

First of all, I wish to know what countries are crossed by the thirty-seventh degree of south latitude.”

"That's Paganel's business," replied Glenarvan.

"Let's question him then," replied the major.

The scholar could no longer be seen, hidden by the thick foliage of the *ombu tree* . It was necessary to call out to him.

"Paganel! Paganel!" cried Glenarvan.

—Present, replied a voice that came from the sky.

-Where are you?

—In my tower.

—What are you doing here?

—I examine the immense horizon.

—Could you come down for a moment?

—Do you need me?

-Yes.

—About what?

—To find out which countries cross the thirty-seventh parallel.

"Nothing could be easier," replied Paganel; "no need to even bother me to tell you."

—Well, go ahead.

—There you go. Leaving America, the thirty-seventh parallel south crosses the Atlantic Ocean.

-Good.

—He encounters the Tristan d'Acunha islands.

-GOOD.

—It passes two degrees below the Cape of Good Hope.

-After?

—He runs across the Indian Ocean.

-Afterwards?

—It touches Saint-Pierre Island in the Amsterdam Islands group.

—Go on.

—It cuts through Australia via the province of Victoria.

—Continue.

—On leaving Australia…»

This last sentence was left unfinished. Was the geographer hesitating? Was the scholar no longer sure?

No; but a tremendous cry was heard from the heights of the *ombu* . Glenarvan and his friends paled as they looked at each other. Had another catastrophe just occurred? Had the unfortunate Paganel let himself fall? Wilson and Mulrady were already flying to his aid when a long body appeared. Paganel was tumbling from branch to branch.

Was he alive? Was he dead? No one knew, but he was about to fall into the roaring waters when the major stopped him as he passed.

"Well, I have to, Mac Nabbs!" cried Paganel.

"What? What's wrong?" said the major. "What's gotten into you? Another one of your endless distractions?"

"Yes! Yes!" replied Paganel, his voice choked with emotion. "Yes! A distraction… Phenomenal this time!"

-Which?

—We were wrong! We are still wrong! We are always wrong!

—Explain yourself!

"Glenarvan, Major, Robert, my friends," cried Paganel, "we are looking for Captain Grant where he is not!"

"What are you saying?" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Not only where he isn't," added Paganel, "but also where he has never been!"

## Chapter XXIV *Where the life of birds continues*

These unexpected words were met with profound astonishment. What did the geographer mean?

Had he lost his mind? He spoke, however, with such conviction that all eyes turned to Glenarvan. Paganel's statement was a direct answer to

the question he had just posed. But Glenarvan merely made a gesture of denial, which proved nothing in the scholar's favor.

However, having mastered his emotions, he resumed speaking.

"Yes!" he said in a convinced voice, "yes! We went astray in our research, and we read in the document what is not there!"

"Explain yourself, Paganel," said the major, "and more calmly."

—It's very simple, Major. Like you, I was mistaken, like you, I was caught up in a false interpretation, when, just a moment ago, at the top of this tree, answering your questions, and stopping on the word "Australia", a flash went through my brain and the light dawned.

"What!" exclaimed Glenarvan, "you claim that Harry Grant?"

—I maintain, replied Paganel, that the word *austral* which is found in the document is not a complete word, as we have believed until now, but rather the root of the word *Australia* .

—That would be unusual! replied the major.

"Personal!" replied Glenarvan, shrugging his shoulders, "that's simply impossible."

"Impossible!" replied Paganel. "That's a word we don't accept in France."

"What!" added Glenarvan in a tone of profound disbelief, "you dare to claim, document in hand, that the sinking of the *Britannia* took place on the coasts of Australia?"

—I'm sure of it! replied Paganel.

"My word, Paganel," said Glenarvan, "that is a claim which surprises me greatly, coming from the secretary of a geographical society."

"For what reason?" asked Paganel, feeling hurt in a sensitive spot.

"Because if you accept the word ' *Australia* ,' you are also admitting that there are *Indians there* , which has never been seen before."

Paganel was not at all surprised by the argument. He had probably expected it, and began to smile.

"My dear Glenarvan," he said, "do not be too quick to triumph; I will 'beat you soundly,' as we French say, and never will the English have been so thoroughly beaten! It will be the revenge of Crécy and Agincourt!"

—I couldn't ask for anything better. Beat me, Paganel.

"Listen. There are no more Indians in the text of the document than there are Patagonias! The incomplete word *'indi'...* doesn't mean *Indians* ; it means *indigenous!* Now, do you admit that there are 'indigenous' people in Australia?"

It must be admitted that at that moment Glenarvan was staring intently at Paganel.

"Bravo! Paganel," said the major, "—do you accept my interpretation, my dear lord?

—Yes! replied Glenarvan, if you prove to me that this remnant of the word *gonie* does not apply to the land of the Patagonians!

—No! Of course not, cried Paganel, it is not about *Patagonia!* Read whatever you want, except that.

—But what?

— *Cosmogony! Theogony! Agony!* …

— *Agony!* said the major.

“That’s all the same to me,” replied Paganel; “the word is of no importance. I won’t even try to find out what it means. The main point is that ‘ *austral’* indicates *Australia* , and one would have had to be blindly committed to a false path not to have discovered such an obvious explanation from the outset. If I had found the document myself, if my judgment hadn’t been distorted by your interpretation, I would never have understood it any other way!”

This time, hurrahs, congratulations, and compliments greeted Paganel's words.

Austin, the sailors, the major, and especially Robert, so happy to be reborn to hope, applauded the worthy scholar. Glenarvan, whose eyes were gradually being opened, was, he said, very close to surrendering.

"One last observation, my dear Paganel, and I will have no choice but to bow before your perspicacity.

—Speak, Glenarvan.

—How do you put these newly interpreted words together, and how do you read the document?

"Nothing could be easier. Here is the document," said Paganel, presenting the precious paper he had been studying so conscientiously for the past few days.

A profound silence fell as the geographer, gathering his thoughts, took his time to reply. His finger traced the broken lines on the document, while in a steady voice, underlining certain words, he spoke thus: " *On June 7, 1862, the three-masted ship Britannia of Glasgow sank after* ..." Let's say, if you like, " *two days, three days ,* " or " *a long agony* ," it doesn't matter, it's entirely irrelevant, " *off the coast of Australia. Heading for land, two sailors and Captain Grant are going to try to land,* " or " *have landed on the continent, where they will be,* " or " *are prisoners of cruel natives. They have thrown this document overboard* ," etc., etc. Is that clear?

—That's clear, replied Glenarvan, if the name "continent" can be applied to Australia, which is just an island!

—Rest assured, my dear Glenarvan, the best geographers agree in calling this island "the Australian continent."

"Then I have only one thing left to say, my friends," cried Glenarvan. "To Australia! And may heaven help us!"

"In Australia!" repeated his companions in unison.

"Do you know, Paganel," added Glenarvan, "that your presence on board the *Duncan* is a providential event?"

"Fine," replied Paganel. "Let's say I'm an emissary of providence, and let's not talk about it anymore!"

Thus ended this conversation, which would have such profound consequences in the future. It completely altered the travelers' state of mind. They had just grasped the thread of the labyrinth in which they had believed themselves forever lost. A new hope arose from the ruins of their shattered plans. They could now leave the American continent behind without fear, and all their thoughts were already turning to the Australian continent. By boarding the *Duncan* again, its passengers would not bring despair on board, and Lady Helena and Mary Grant would not have to mourn the irrevocable loss of Captain Grant! Therefore, they forgot the dangers of their situation and gave themselves over to joy, with only one regret: that they could not depart without delay.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon. They decided to have supper at six. Paganel wanted to celebrate this happy day with a splendid feast. However, the menu was very limited, so he suggested to Robert that they go hunting "in the nearby forest." Robert applauded this good idea. They took Thalcave's powder magazine, cleaned the revolvers, loaded them with shot, and set off.

"Don't wander off," the major said gravely to the two hunters.

After they left, Glenarvan and Mac Nabbs went to consult the marks carved into the tree, while Wilson and Mulrady relit the coals in the brazier.

Glenarvan, descending to the surface of the immense lake, saw no sign of receding waters. However, the waters seemed to have reached their maximum height; but the force with which they flowed from south to north proved that equilibrium had not yet been established among

the Argentine rivers. Before the waters could recede, this mass of water first had to remain calm, like the sea at the moment when the flood tide ends and the ebb tide begins. Therefore, a drop in the waters could not be expected as long as they flowed northward with such torrential speed.

While Glenarvan and the major were making their observations, gunshots rang out from the tree, accompanied by almost equally loud shouts of joy. Robert's soprano saxophone was playing delicate trills over Paganel's bass. It was a competition to see who could be the most childlike. The hunt was off to a good start, and promised culinary delights.

When the major and Glenarvan returned to the brazier, they first had to congratulate Wilson on an excellent idea. This brave sailor, using a pin and a piece of string, had made a miraculous catch. Several dozen small fish, as delicate as smelts, and called "mojarras," wriggled in a fold of his *poncho* , promising to make an exquisite dish.

At that moment, the hunters descended from the *ombu treetops* . Paganel cautiously carried black swallow eggs and a string of sparrows, which he would later present as "mauviettes" (small, green and yellow birds). Robert had skillfully shot several pairs of "hilgueros," small green and yellow birds, excellent to eat and in high demand at the Montevideo market.

Paganel, who knew fifty-one ways of preparing eggs, had to limit himself this time to hardening them under hot ashes.

Nevertheless, the meal was as varied as it was delicious.

Dried meat, hard-boiled eggs, grilled *mojarras* , roasted sparrows and *hilgueros* made up one of those feasts whose memory is imperishable.

The conversation was very lively. Paganel was lavishly complimented on his dual skills as a hunter and cook. The scholar accepted these congratulations with the modesty befitting true merit. Then, he indulged in curious observations about the magnificent *ombu tree* that sheltered him with its foliage, and whose depths, according to him, were immense.

“Robert and I,” he added jokingly, “thought we were deep in the forest during the hunt. For a moment, I thought we were going to get lost. I couldn’t find my way back! The sun was setting on the horizon! I searched in vain for traces of my own footsteps. Hunger was gnawing at me! Already the dark thickets were echoing with the roar of wild beasts… That is to say, no! There are no wild beasts, and I regret it!”

"What!" said Glenarvan, "you miss the ferocious beasts?"

—Yes! Certainly.

—However, when we have everything to fear from their ferocity…

"Ferocity does not exist… Scientifically speaking," replied the scientist.

"Ah! For once, Paganel," said the major, "you will never make me admit the usefulness of ferocious beasts! What are they good for?"

"Major!" cried Paganel, "but they are used to make classifications, orders, families, genera, subgenera, species…"

"What a great advantage!" said Mac Nabbs. "I could do without it! If I had been one of Noah's companions at the time of the flood, I would certainly have prevented that imprudent patriarch from putting pairs of lions, tigers, panthers, bears and other animals as harmful as they were useless into the ark."

"Would you have done that?" asked Paganel.

—I would have done it.

—Well! You would have been wrong from a zoological point of view!

"Not from a human point of view," replied the major.

"That's outrageous!" replied Paganel, "and for my part, on the contrary, I would have precisely preserved the megatheriums, the pterodactyls, and all the antediluvian beings of which we are so unfortunately deprived…"

“I tell you,” replied the major, “that Noah acted wrongly, and that he has deserved the curse of scholars for all time!”

Paganel and the Major's listeners couldn't help but laugh as they watched the two friends argue about old Noah. The Major, contrary to all his principles—he who had never argued with anyone in his life—was now constantly at odds with Paganel. It seemed the scholar particularly aroused him. Glenarvan, true to form, intervened in the debate and said:

"Whether it is regrettable or not, from a scientific as well as a human point of view, to be deprived of ferocious animals, we must resign

ourselves today to their absence. Paganel could not hope to encounter them in this aerial forest."

"Why not?" replied the scholar.

"Wild beasts in a tree?" said Tom Austin.

—Well! No doubt! The American tiger, the jaguar, when it is too strongly pressed by hunters, takes refuge in the trees! One of these animals, surprised by the flood, could perfectly well have sought refuge among the branches of the *ombu* .

"Well, you haven't met any, I suppose?" said the major.

“No,” replied Paganel, “although we searched the entire woods. It’s a pity, for it would have been a superb hunt. What a ferocious carnivore that jaguar is! With a single swipe of its paw, it can wring a horse’s neck! Once it has tasted human flesh, it returns to it with relish. What it likes best is the Indian, then the Black man, then the mulatto, then the white man.”

—Delighted to be only in the fourth row! replied Mac Nabbs.

"Well! That just proves how bland you are!" retorted
Paganel disdainfully.

"Delighted to be bland!" retorted the major.

"Well, that's humiliating!" replied the intractable Paganel. "The white man proclaims himself the first among men! It seems the jaguars don't share that opinion!"

“In any case, my good Paganel,” said Glenarvan, “since there are neither Indians, nor Negroes, nor mulattoes among us, I rejoice in the absence of your dear jaguars. Our situation is not so pleasant…”

"What! Agreeable," cried Paganel, seizing upon this word which could give a new direction to the conversation, "you complain about your lot, Glenarvan?"

"No doubt," replied Glenarvan. "Are you comfortable in these uncomfortable and poorly padded branches?"

—I've never felt better, not even in my study. We're living the life of birds, we're singing, we're flitting about! I'm beginning to believe that men are destined to live in trees.

"All they're missing is wings!" said the major.

—They'll make some one day!

—In the meantime, replied Glenarvan, allow me, my dear friend, to prefer to this aerial abode the sand of a park, the parquet floor of a house, or the deck of a ship!

"Glenarvan," replied Paganel, "one must accept things as they come! Good things, so much the better. Bad things, one doesn't pay attention to. I see you miss the comforts of Malcolm-Castle!"

—No, but…

"I am certain that Robert is perfectly happy," Paganel hastened to say, "to secure at least one supporter for his theories."

"Yes, Mr. Paganel!" exclaimed Robert joyfully.

"That's typical of his age," replied Glenarvan.

"And mine too!" retorted the scholar. "The less comfort one has, the fewer needs one has. The fewer needs one has, the happier one is."

—Come on, said the major, here comes Paganel who is going to make a sortie against riches and gilded paneling.

—No, Mac Nabbs, replied the scholar, but if you will, I will tell you, in this regard, a little Arabic story that comes to mind.

—Yes! Yes! Mr. Paganel, said Robert.

"And what will your story prove?" asked the major.

—As all the stories prove, my good friend.

"Not much then," replied Mac Nabbs. "Well, go on, Scheherazade, and tell us one of those stories you tell so well."

“Once upon a time,” said Paganel, “there was a son of the great Harun al-Rashid who was unhappy. He went to consult an old dervish. The wise old man told him that happiness was difficult to find in this world. ‘However,’ he added, ‘I know a surefire way to bring you happiness.’ ‘What is it?’ asked the young prince. ‘It is,’ replied the dervish, ‘to put on the shirt of a happy man!’ With that, the prince embraced the old man and went off in search of his talisman. And so he set off. He visited all the capitals of the earth! He tried on kings’ shirts, emperors’ shirts, princes’ shirts, and lords’ shirts. All in vain. He was no happier! Then he tried on artists’ shirts, warriors’ shirts, and merchants’ shirts. Still no better.” He traveled a long way without finding happiness. Finally, despairing of having tried on so many shirts, he was returning, quite

sad, one fine day to his father's palace, when he noticed in the countryside a cheerful, singing plowman, pushing his plow. "Here, surely, is a man who possesses happiness," he said to himself, "or happiness does not exist on earth." He went up to him. "Good man," he said, "are you happy?" "Yes!" replied the other. "You desire nothing?" "No." "You wouldn't trade your lot for that of a king?" "Never!" "Well then, sell me your shirt!" "My shirt! I don't have one!"

## Chapter XXV *Between Fire and Water*

Jacques Paganel's story was a great success. It was loudly applauded, but everyone kept their opinion, and the scholar achieved the common result of any discussion: convincing no one.

However, they remained in agreement on this point, that one must make the best of a bad situation, and be content with a tree, when one has neither palace nor cottage.

During these speeches and other events, evening had arrived.

Only a good night's sleep could bring this eventful day to a fitting end. The inhabitants of the *ombu* felt not only weary from the flood's ordeal, but above all overwhelmed by the day's excessive heat. Their winged companions were already setting an example of rest; the *hilgueros* , those nightingales of the pampas, had ceased their melodious trills, and all the birds in the tree had disappeared into the thick, darkened foliage. The best thing to do was to follow their example.

However, before "settling down," as Paganel put it, Glenarvan, Robert, and he climbed to the observatory to examine the liquid plain one last time. It was about nine o'clock. The sun had just set in the sparkling

mists of the western horizon. This entire half of the celestial sphere, up to the zenith, was shrouded in a warm vapor. The brilliant constellations of the southern hemisphere seemed veiled by a light gauze and appeared indistinct. Nevertheless, they were still distinguishable enough to be recognized, and Paganel showed his friend Robert, for the benefit of his friend Glenarvan, this circumpolar zone where the stars are splendid. Among other things, he pointed out the Southern Cross, a group of four first- and second-magnitude stars arranged in a lozenge, roughly at the height of the pole; Centaurus, where the nearest star to Earth shines, only eight trillion leagues away; the Magellanic Clouds, two vast nebulae, the larger of which covers an area two hundred times the apparent surface area of the moon; and finally, this "black hole" where stellar matter seems to be completely absent.

To his great regret, Orion, visible from both hemispheres, had not yet appeared; but Paganel taught his two students a curious peculiarity of Patagonian cosmography. In the eyes of these poetic Indians, Orion represents an immense *lazo* and three bolas thrown by the hand of the hunter traversing the celestial plains. All these constellations, reflected in the mirror of the waters, inspired awe, creating around him a kind of double sky.

While the scholar Paganel was holding forth in this way, the entire eastern horizon took on a stormy aspect.

A thick, dark, sharply defined bar rose gradually, extinguishing the stars. This sinister-looking cloud soon invaded half the vault, seeming to fill it. Its driving force must have resided within itself, for there was not a breath of wind. The atmospheric layers remained perfectly still.

Not a leaf stirred on the tree, not a ripple ruffled the surface of the water. Even the air seemed to be lacking, as if some vast pneumatic machine had rarefied it. A high-voltage electricity saturated the atmosphere, and every living being felt it coursing through its nerves.

Glenarvan, Paganel and Robert were noticeably impressed by these electrical waves.

"We're going to have a storm," said Paganel.

"Aren't you afraid of thunder?" Glenarvan asked the young boy.

"Oh! *My lord* ," replied Robert.

—Well, that's good, because the storm is not far off.

"And it will be strong," Paganel continued, "if I judge by the state of the sky."

“It’s not the storm that worries me,” Glenarvan continued, “but the torrents of rain that will accompany it. We’ll be soaked to the bone. Whatever you say, Paganel, a nest is no substitute for a man, and you’ll soon learn that the hard way.”

—Oh! With philosophy! replied the scholar.

—Philosophy doesn't prevent you from getting wet!

—No, but it warms you up.

"Finally," said Glenarvan, "let us join our friends and urge them to embrace their philosophy and their *ponchos* as closely as possible, and above all to stock up on patience, for we will need it!"

Glenarvan cast a final glance at the threatening sky. The mass of clouds now covered it entirely. Only a faint band towards the west was illuminated by twilight gleams.

The water took on a dark hue and resembled a vast, lower cloud, ready to merge with the heavy vapors. Even shadows were no longer visible. Sensations of light or sound reached neither eyes nor ears. The silence became as profound as the darkness.

"Let's go down," said Glenarvan, "the lightning will strike soon!"

He and his two friends slid down the smooth branches, and were quite surprised to enter a kind of very surprising half-light; it was produced by a myriad of luminous points that crossed each other, buzzing on the surface of the water.

"Phosphorescences?" said Glenarvan.

—No, replied Paganel, but phosphorescent insects, real fireflies, living and inexpensive diamonds, from which the ladies of Buenos Aires make magnificent adornments!

"What!" exclaimed Robert, "are those insects flying like sparks?"

"Yes, my boy."

Robert grabbed one of these brilliant insects.

Paganel was not mistaken. It was a kind of large bumblebee, about an inch long, which the Indians called "tuco-tuco." This curious beetle emitted glimmers from two spots located in front of its thorax, and its rather bright light would have allowed one to read in the dark. Paganel,

bringing the insect close to his watch, could see that it read ten o'clock in the evening.

Glenarvan, having joined the major and the three sailors, gave them recommendations for the night.

A violent storm was expected. After the first rumbles of thunder, the wind would undoubtedly unleash its fury, and the *ombu* would be severely shaken. Everyone was therefore urged to fasten themselves tightly to the bed of branches that had been assigned to them. If they couldn't avoid the rain, they could at least guard against the waters of the earth and avoid falling into the swift current that broke at the foot of the tree.

We wished each other a good night without really expecting it.

Then, each one slipped into their airy bed, wrapped themselves in their *poncho* and waited for sleep.

But the approach of great natural phenomena casts a vague unease into the heart of every sentient being, from which even the strongest cannot defend themselves. The inhabitants of the *ombu* , agitated and oppressed, could not close their eyes, and the first clap of thunder found them wide awake. It occurred a little before eleven o'clock in the form of a distant rumble. Glenarvan reached the tip of the horizontal branch and ventured his head out of the foliage.

The dark evening sky was already scarred with sharp, brilliant incisions that the lake's waters reflected with clarity. The clouds were tearing in many places, but like soft, cottony fabric, without any shrill noise.

Glenarvan, after observing the zenith and the horizon which merged in equal darkness, returned to the top of the trunk.

"What do you say to that, Glenarvan?" asked Paganel.

—I say that this is a good start, my friends, and if this continues, the storm will be terrible.

"So much the better," replied the enthusiastic Paganel, "I love a beautiful spectacle just as much, since I cannot flee from it."

"There's another one of your theories that's about to be blown up," said the major.

—And one of my best, Mac Nabbs. I agree with Glenarvan, the storm will be magnificent. Just now, while I was trying to sleep, several things came back to me that give me hope, because we are in the region of great electrical storms. I read somewhere, in fact, that in 1793, specifically in the province of Buenos Aires, thunder struck thirty-seven times during a single storm. My colleague, Mr. Martin De Moussy, counted up to fifty-five minutes of uninterrupted thunder.

—Watch in hand? said the major.

“Watch in hand. Only one thing would worry me,” added Paganel, “if worrying were a way to avoid danger, it’s that the only high point on this plain is precisely the *ombu* where we are. A lightning rod would be very useful here, because this tree, of all those on the pampas, is the one that lightning particularly likes. And besides, as you know, my friends, the experts recommend not seeking shelter under trees during a storm.”

"Well," said the major, "that's a timely recommendation!"

"I must admit, Paganel," replied Glenarvan, "that you have chosen a good moment to tell us these reassuring things!"

"Bah!" replied Paganel, "any time is a good time to learn. Ah! Here we go!"

More violent claps of thunder interrupted this inopportune conversation; their intensity increased as they gained higher tones; they drew closer and moved from low to medium, to borrow a very apt comparison from music.

Soon they became shrill and made the atmospheric strings vibrate with rapid oscillations. Space was on fire, and in this blaze, it was impossible to recognize to which electrical spark these endlessly prolonged rollings belonged, which reverberated from echo to echo into the depths of the sky.

The incessant lightning flashes took on a variety of forms. Some, launched perpendicularly to the ground, repeated themselves five or six times in the same spot. Others would have greatly aroused the curiosity of a scholar, for while Arago, in his curious statistics, recorded only two examples of forked lightning, here they recurred by the hundreds. Some, dividing into a thousand different branches, formed coral-like zigzags, and produced astonishing displays of arborescent light against the darkened vault.

Soon the entire sky, from east to north, was underpinned by a phosphorescent band of intense brilliance. This fire gradually spread across the entire horizon, igniting the clouds like a mass of combustible

material, and, soon reflected by the shimmering waters, it formed an immense sphere of fire whose ombu *occupied* the central point.

Glenarvan and his companions watched this terrifying spectacle in silence. They could not have made themselves heard. Sheets of white light slid towards them, and in these rapid flashes appeared and disappeared vividly sometimes the calm face of the major, sometimes the curious face of Paganel or the energetic features of Glenarvan, sometimes the frightened head of Robert or the carefree physiognomy of the sailors suddenly animated by a spectral life.

However, the rain had not yet fallen, and the wind remained silent. But soon the cataracts of the sky parted, and vertical streaks stretched like a weaver's threads against the black background of the sky. These large drops of water, striking the surface of the lake, burst forth in thousands of sparks illuminated by the fire of lightning.

Did this rain signal the end of the storm?

Were Glenarvan and his companions to get away with just a few vigorous showers? No. At the height of this aerial firefight, at the tip of the horizontally extending main branch, a flaming globe the size of a fist suddenly appeared, surrounded by black smoke. This ball, after spinning for a few seconds, exploded like a bomb, with a noise so loud it could be heard amidst the general din. Sulphurous vapor filled the air.

There was a moment of silence, and then Tom Austin's voice could be heard shouting:

"The tree is on fire."

Tom Austin was not mistaken. In a moment, the flame, as if it had been communicated to an immense piece of firework, spread to the west side of the *ombu* ; the dead wood, the nests of dried grass, and finally all the sapwood, of a spongy nature, provided a favorable food for its devouring activity.

The wind then rose and fanned the flames. They had to flee. Glenarvan and his men hastily took refuge in the eastern part of the *ombu* , spared by the flames, speechless, bewildered, and terrified, climbing, sliding, and venturing onto branches that bent under their weight. Meanwhile, the branches crackled, sizzled, and writhed in the fire like snakes burned alive; their incandescent fragments fell into the overflowing waters and were carried away by the current, scattering tawny sparks. The flames sometimes rose to prodigious heights and were lost in the blaze of the atmosphere; at other times, driven back by the unleashed hurricane, they enveloped the *ombu* like the robe of Nessus. Glenarvan, Robert, the major, Paganel, and the sailors were terrified; A thick smoke suffocated them; an intolerable heat burned them; the fire was spreading to the lower part of the tree; nothing could stop or extinguish it! Finally, the situation became untenable, and of two deaths, the less cruel one had to be chosen.

"Into the water!" shouted Glenarvan.

Wilson, whom the flames were reaching, had already rushed into the lake when he was heard to cry out with the accent of the most violent terror:

"Mine! Mine!"

Austin rushed over to him and helped him back up to the top of the trunk.

"What is it?"

"The caimans! The caimans!" replied Wilson.

And the foot of the tree appeared surrounded by the most fearsome animals of the saurian order. Their scales shimmered in the broad patches of light cast by the fire; their tails flattened vertically, their heads like spearheads, their bulging eyes, their jaws split to the back of the ear—all these characteristic features could not deceive Paganel. He recognized those ferocious alligators, peculiar to America, and called caimans in Spanish-speaking countries. There were about ten of them, thrashing the water with their formidable tails and attacking the *ombu* with the long teeth of their lower jaws.

At this sight, the unfortunate men felt lost. A terrible death awaited them, whether they perished devoured by flames or by the teeth of crocodiles. And the major himself was heard, in a calm voice, saying:

"This could very well be the end of the end."

The storm was then in its waning phase, but it had generated a considerable amount of vapor in the atmosphere, to which electrical phenomena would impart extreme violence. In the south, an enormous waterspout, a cone of fog, point downwards and base upwards, was gradually forming, connecting the churning waters to the storm clouds. This meteor soon advanced, spinning on its axis with dizzying speed; it drove towards its center a column of liquid lifted from the lake, and a

powerful pull, produced by its gyratory motion, drew all the surrounding air currents towards it.

In a few moments, the gigantic waterspout hurled itself upon the *ombu tree* and embraced it with its folds. The tree was shaken to its very roots. Glenarvan could have imagined that the caimans were attacking it with their powerful jaws and tearing it from the ground. He and his companions, clinging to one another, felt the sturdy tree give way and tumble; its flaming branches plunged into the tumultuous waters with a terrible hiss. It was the work of a second. The waterspout, already past, carried its disastrous force elsewhere, and, pumping the waters of the lake, seemed to empty it in its wake.

Then the *ombu* , lying on the water, drifted away under the combined forces of the wind and the current. The caimans had fled, except for one, which crawled along the upturned roots and advanced with its jaws open; but Mulrady, seizing a branch half-eaten by the fire, struck the animal with such a violent blow that it broke its back. The tumbled caiman plunged into the swirling torrent. Glenarvan and his companions, freed from these voracious reptiles, reached the branches upwind of the fire, while the *ombu* , its flames, in the hurricane's breath, rounded into incandescent sails, drifted like a burning fireship in the shadows of the night.

## Chapter XXVI *The Atlantic*

For two hours, the *ombu* sailed across the immense lake without reaching dry land. The flames that were consuming it had gradually died out.

The main danger of this dreadful crossing had disappeared. The major merely stated that it would come as no surprise if anyone tried to escape.

The current, maintaining its original direction, was still flowing from southwest to northeast.

The darkness, barely illuminated here and there by some late flash, had become deep again, and Paganel searched in vain for landmarks on the horizon.

The storm was coming to an end. The large raindrops gave way to light sprays that scattered in the breeze, and the large, deflated clouds broke up into bands in the upper reaches of the sky.

The ombu tree *moved* swiftly down the rushing torrent; it glided with surprising speed, as if some powerful engine of locomotion were concealed beneath its bark. There was no proof that it wouldn't drift like this for days on end. Around three o'clock in the morning, however, the major observed that its roots were just touching the ground.

Tom Austin, using a long detached branch, carefully probed and found that the ground sloped upwards. Indeed, twenty minutes later, there was a jolt, and the *ombu* came to an abrupt halt.

"Land! Land!" cried Paganel in a resounding voice.

The tips of the charred branches had met a rise in the ground. Never were sailors more pleased to make landfall. The obstacle here was the harbor. Robert and Wilson, already launched onto solid ground, were shouting hurrahs of joy when a familiar whistle sounded. The gallop of

a horse echoed across the plain, and the tall figure of the Indian rose from the shadows.

"Thalcave!" cried Robert.

"Thalcave!" replied his companions.

" *Amigos!* " said the Patagonian, who had waited for the travelers where the current was to take them, since he had led them there himself.

At that moment, he scooped Robert Grant into his arms, unaware that Paganel was clinging to him, and held him close to his chest. Soon, Glenarvan, the major, and the sailors, overjoyed to see their faithful guide again, were squeezing his hands with vigorous warmth. Then, the Patagonian led them into the shed of an abandoned estancia.

A good fire blazed there, warming them; succulent slices of venison roasted there, and they devoured every last bit. And when their minds, now at rest, began to reflect, none of them could believe they had escaped this adventure fraught with so many different dangers: water, fire, and the fearsome caimans of the Argentinian rivers.

Thalcave, in a few words, recounted his story to Paganel, and attributed all the credit for his rescue to his intrepid horse. Paganel then tried to explain the new interpretation of the document and the hopes it offered. Did the Native American fully grasp the scholar's ingenious hypotheses? One might doubt it, but he saw his friends happy and confident, and that was all he needed.

It is easy to believe that these intrepid travelers, after their day of rest spent on the *ombu* , did not need to be asked twice to set off again.

At eight o'clock in the morning, they were ready to leave.

We were too far south of the estancias and saladeros to obtain means of transport.

Therefore, it was absolutely necessary to go on foot. It was, in short, only about forty miles, and Thaouka would not refuse to carry a tired pedestrian from time to time, and even two if necessary.

The shores of the Atlantic could be reached in thirty-six hours.

When the time came, the guide and his companions left behind the immense low-lying area still submerged under water, and headed across higher plains. The Argentinian landscape resumed its monotonous appearance; a few clumps of trees, planted by European hands, ventured here and there above the pastures, which were as rare, moreover, as in the vicinity of the Sierras Tandil and Tapalquem; native trees only managed to grow at the edge of these long grasslands and near Cape Corrientes.

And so that day passed. The next day, fifteen miles before reaching their destination, the proximity of the ocean made itself felt. The *virazon* , a peculiar wind that blows regularly during the second halves of the day and night, bent the tall grasses. From the parched soil rose sparse woods, small tree-like mimosas, acacia bushes, and clumps of *curra-mabol* .

Several salt flats shimmered like shards of broken glass, making the journey difficult as they had to be rounded. They quickened their pace to reach Lake Salado on the ocean shores that same day, and, to tell the truth, the travelers were quite tired when, at eight o'clock in the

evening, they caught sight of the sand dunes, twenty fathoms high, that mark its foaming edge. Soon, the long murmur of the rising sea reached their ears.

"The ocean!" cried Paganel.

"Yes, the ocean!" replied Thalcave.

And these walkers, who seemed to be running out of strength, were soon climbing the dunes with remarkable agility.

But the darkness was already great. Their eyes wandered in vain across the dark immensity. They searched for *Duncan* , without catching sight of him.

"But he is here," cried Glenarvan, "waiting for us and running from side to side!"

"We'll see tomorrow," replied Mac Nabbs.

Tom Austin hailed the unseen yacht, but received no reply. The wind was very strong, and the sea quite rough. Clouds were driving in from the west, and the foaming crests of the waves were blown as fine dust over the dunes. So, if the *Duncan* was at the appointed rendezvous, the man on the cathead could neither be heard nor hear. The coast offered no shelter. No bay, no cove, no harbor. Not even a creek. It consisted of long sandbanks that stretched out to sea, and whose approach was more dangerous than that of the rocks just below the surface. The banks, in fact, whipped the waves; the sea was particularly rough there, and ships were sure to be lost when, in heavy weather, they ran aground on these carpets of sand.

It was therefore quite natural that the *Duncan* , judging this coast detestable and without a safe harbor, should keep its distance. John Mangles, with his usual prudence, should have sailed as far upriver as possible. This was Tom Austin's opinion, and he asserted that the *Duncan* could not stay within five good miles of the open sea.

The major therefore urged his impatient friend to resign himself to the situation. There was no way to dispel this thick darkness. What good, then, was it to tire his eyes by wandering over the gloomy horizon?

Having said this, he set up a sort of camp sheltered by the dunes; the last provisions were used for the final meal of the voyage; then each man, following the major's example, dug himself an improvised bed in a fairly comfortable hole, and, pulling the immense blanket of sand up to his chin, fell into a deep sleep. Only Glenarvan remained awake. The wind remained a strong breeze, and the ocean still felt the effects of the past storm. Its waves, still tumultuous, broke at the foot of the sandbanks with a thunderous roar. Glenarvan could not bear the thought of the *Duncan* being so close. As for supposing that it had not arrived at the agreed rendezvous, that was inconceivable. Glenarvan had left Talcahuano Bay on October 14th, and he was arriving on the shores of the Atlantic on November 12th. However, during this thirty-day period spent crossing Chile, the Andes, the pampas, the Argentine plain, the *Duncan* had had time to round Cape Horn and arrive on the opposite coast.

For such a seasoned sailor, delays were not an option; the storm had certainly been violent and its fury terrible across the vast expanse of

the Atlantic, but the yacht was a good vessel and its captain a good sailor. So, since he had to be there, he was there.

These reflections, however, did not succeed in calming Glenarvan. When heart and reason struggle, reason is not the stronger. The laird of Malcolm-Castle felt in this darkness all those he loved: his dear Helena, Mary Grant, the crew of his *Duncan* . He wandered along the deserted shore, its waves shimmering with phosphorescent glitter. He watched, he listened. He even thought, at times, that he glimpsed a faint glimmer at sea.

"I'm not mistaken," he said to himself, "I saw a ship's light, the light of the *Duncan* . Ah! Why can't my eyes pierce this darkness!"

An idea then came to him. Paganel claimed to be nyctalopic; Paganel could see at night. He went to wake Paganel. The scholar was sleeping in his molehill when a strong arm snatched him from his bed of sand.

"Who goes there?" he exclaimed.

—It's me, Paganel.

—Who, you?

—Glenarvan. Come, I need your eyes.

"My eyes?" replied Paganel, rubbing them vigorously.

—Yes, your eyes, to distinguish our *Duncan* in this darkness. Come on, come.

"To hell with night vision!" said Paganel, delighted, moreover, to be useful to Glenarvan.

And getting up, shaking his numb limbs, "brrrbrrr" like people waking up, he followed his friend onto the shore.

Glenarvan asked him to examine the dark horizon of the sea. For a few minutes, Paganel conscientiously devoted himself to this contemplation.

"Well! Don't you see anything?" asked Glenarvan.

—Nothing! Even a cat couldn't see two steps away from him.

—Look for a red light or a green light, that is, a port or starboard light.

"I see neither green nor red lights! Everything is black!" replied Paganel, whose eyes were involuntarily closing.

For half an hour, he followed his impatient friend mechanically, letting his head fall onto his chest, then jerking it up abruptly. He didn't answer, he no longer spoke. His unsteady steps made him roll like a drunken man.

Glenarvan looked at Paganel. Paganel was asleep as he walked.

Glenarvan then took him by the arm, and, without waking him, led him back to his hole, where he buried him comfortably. At daybreak, everyone was roused to their feet by this cry:

"The *Duncan!* The *Duncan!"*

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" Glenarvan's companions replied, rushing onto the shore.

Indeed, five miles offshore, the yacht, its lower sails carefully furled, was running on a light mist. Its smoke dissipated indistinctly into the morning fog. The sea was rough, and a vessel of that tonnage could not safely approach the foot of the banks.

Glenarvan, armed with Paganel's spyglass, observed the *Duncan 's movements* . John Mangles must not have seen his passengers, because he was not moving, and continued to run, on a port tack, under his reefed topsail.

But at that moment, Thalcave, after heavily loading his rifle, discharged it in the direction of the yacht.

We listened. We watched, above all. Three times, the Indian's rifle rang out, awakening the echoes of the dunes.

Finally, white smoke appeared on the sides of the yacht.

"They saw us!" cried Glenarvan. "It's the *Duncan's cannon!* "

And, a few seconds later, a muffled explosion died away at the edge of the shore. Immediately, the *Duncan* , changing its topsail and intensifying the fire in its stoves, maneuvered to approach the coast more closely.

Soon, with the help of the telescope, a boat was seen detaching itself from the shore.

"Lady Helena will not be able to come," said Tom Austin, "the sea is too rough!"

—Neither can John Mangles, replied Mac Nabbs, he cannot leave his ship.

—My sister! My sister! said Robert, stretching his arms towards the yacht which was rolling violently.

"Ah! How I long to be on board!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Patience, Edward. You'll be there in two hours," replied the major.

Two hours! Indeed, the boat, equipped with six oars, could not complete its round trip in less time.

Then Glenarvan joined Thalcave, who, with his arms crossed and Thaouka beside him, was calmly watching the moving surface of the waves.

Glenarvan took her hand and showed her the yacht:

"Come," he said.

The Indian shook his head gently.

“Come, friend,” Glenarvan continued.

"No," Thalcave replied softly. "Here is Thaouka, and there, the pampas!" he added, passionately embracing the vast expanse of the plains.

Glenarvan understood perfectly well that the Indian would never want to abandon the prairie where the bones of his fathers lay bleaching. He knew the religious attachment these children of the desert had for their native land. So he shook Thalcave's hand and didn't press the matter. He didn't press the matter either when the Indian, smiling in his own way, refused the price of his services, saying:

"Out of friendship."

Glenarvan couldn't answer him. He would have liked to leave at least one memento for the brave Native American, something to remind him of his friends in Europe. But what did he have left? His weapons, his horses—he had lost everything in the devastating flood. His friends were no richer than he was.

He didn't know how to recognize the brave guide's selflessness, when an idea came to him. He took from his wallet a precious locket that surrounded an admirable portrait, a masterpiece by Lawrence, and offered it to the Indian.

"My wife," he said.

Thalcave gazed at the portrait with a tender eye, and uttered these simple words:

"Good and beautiful!"

Then Robert, Paganel, the major, Tom Austin, and the two sailors came with touching words to bid farewell to the Patagonian. These good men were genuinely moved to be leaving this intrepid and devoted friend. Thalcave pressed them all to his broad chest. Paganel persuaded him to accept a map of South America and the two oceans, which the Native American had often studied with interest. It was the scholar's most precious possession. As for Robert, he had only his caresses to give; he offered them to his savior, and Thaouka was not forgotten in his offering.

*Duncan* 's boat was approaching; it slipped into a narrow channel dug between the banks, and soon came aground on the shore.

"My wife?" asked Glenarvan.

"My sister?" Robert exclaimed.

“Lady Helena and Miss Grant are waiting for you on board,” replied the boatman. “But let’s go, Your Honor, we haven’t a minute to lose, for the ebb tide is beginning to make itself felt.”

The last embraces were bestowed upon the Native American. Thalcave accompanied the friends to the boat, which was refloated. As Robert climbed aboard, the Native American took him in his arms and gazed at him tenderly.

"And now go," he said, "you are a man!"

—Farewell, friend! Farewell! said Glenarvan once more.

"Will we never see each other again?" cried Paganel.

" *Who knows?"* replied Thalcave, raising his arm towards the sky.

These were the Indian's last words, lost in the breath of the wind. They pushed out to sea. The canoe drifted away, carried by the receding tide.

For a long time, Thalcave's motionless figure appeared through the foam of the waves. Then his great height diminished, and he disappeared from the sight of his friends of the day. An hour later, Robert was the first to leap aboard the *Duncan* and throw himself into Mary Grant's arms, while the yacht's crew filled the air with their joyful hurrahs.

Thus was accomplished this crossing of South America along a rigorously straight line. Neither mountains nor rivers caused the travelers to deviate from their imperturbable course, and, if they did not have to fight the ill will of men, the elements, often unleashed against them, subjected their generous intrepidity to harsh tests.

## PART TWO

### Chapter I *The Return Aboard*

The first moments were devoted to the joy of seeing each other again. Lord Glenarvan had not wanted the unsuccessful search to dampen the joy in his friends' hearts. Therefore, his first words were: "Have faith, my friends, have faith! Captain Grant is not with us, but we are certain we will find him."

Nothing less than such assurance was needed to restore hope to the passengers of the *Duncan* .

Indeed, Lady Helena and Mary Grant, while the boat was making its way to the yacht, had experienced the thousand anxieties of waiting. From the top of the quarterdeck, they tried to count those returning on board.

Sometimes the young girl despaired; at other times, on the contrary, she imagined she saw Harry Grant. Her heart pounded; she couldn't speak, she could barely stand. Lady Helena held her in her arms. John Mangles, observing nearby, remained silent; his sailor's eyes, so accustomed to distinguishing distant objects, did not see the captain.

"He's here! He's coming! My father!" the young girl whispered. But as the longboat drew ever closer, the illusion vanished. The travelers were barely a hundred fathoms from the shore when not only Lady Helena and John Mangles, but Mary herself, her eyes brimming with tears, had

lost all hope. It was high time Lord Glenarvan arrived and offered his reassuring words.

After the initial embraces, Lady Helena, Mary Grant, and John Mangles were briefed on the principal incidents of the expedition, and, above all, Glenarvan shared with them this new interpretation of the document, thanks to the insight of Jacques Paganel. He also praised Robert, of whom Mary had every right to be proud. His courage, his devotion, the dangers he had faced—all were emphasized by Glenarvan, to the point that the young boy would have been at a loss for where to hide had his sister not offered him refuge.

"There's no need to blush, Robert," said John Mangles, "you behaved like a worthy son of Captain Grant!"

He stretched out his arms to Mary's brother, and pressed his lips to his cheeks, still damp with the girl's tears.

We mention here only for the record the welcome given to the major and the geographer, and the honor bestowed upon the generous Thalcave. Lady Helena regretted not being able to shake the hand of the brave Native American. Mac Nabbs, after the initial outpouring of affection, had retired to his cabin, where he was shaving with a calm and steady hand. As for Paganel, he flitted from one to another like a bee, gathering the nectar of compliments and smiles. He wanted to embrace the entire crew of the *Duncan* , and, maintaining that Lady Helena was as much a part of it as Mary Grant, he began his greetings with them, finishing with Mr. Olbinett.

The *steward* thought he could not better recognize such politeness than by announcing lunch.

"Lunch?" exclaimed Paganel.

"Yes, Mr. Paganel," replied Mr. Olbinett.

—A real lunch, on a real table, with cutlery and napkins?

—No doubt, Mr. Paganel.

—And we won't eat any *charqui* , hard-boiled eggs, or ostrich fillets?

"Oh! sir!" replied the head waiter, humiliated in his art.

“I didn’t mean to offend you, my friend,” said the scholar with a smile. “But for the past month, this has been our daily routine, and we dined not sitting at a table, but stretched out on the ground, unless we were straddling trees. This luncheon you just described must therefore have seemed to me a dream, a fiction, a chimera!”

"Well, let's go and see for ourselves, Mr. Paganel," replied Lady Helena, who couldn't stop herself from laughing.

"Here is my arm," said the gallant geographer.

"Your honor has no orders to give me regarding the *Duncan?"* asked John Mangles.

“After lunch, my dear John,” replied Glenarvan, “we will discuss the program for our new expedition as a family.”

The yacht's passengers and the young captain went down into the mess. The engineer was ordered to maintain pressure, so as to depart at the first signal.

The major, freshly shaved, and the travelers, after a quick wash, took their places at the table.

Mr. Olbinett's luncheon was celebrated. It was declared excellent, and even superior to the splendid feasts of the pampas; Paganel returned twice to each course, "out of distraction," he said.

This unfortunate remark prompted Lady Glenarvan to ask if the amiable Frenchman had sometimes fallen back into his usual sin. The major and Lord Glenarvan exchanged smiles. As for Paganel, he burst out laughing heartily and pledged "on his honor" not to commit a single distraction for the entire journey; then he gave a very amusing account of his mishap and his profound studies of Camoëns' work.

"After all," he added in closing, "every cloud has a silver lining, and I do not regret my mistake."

"And why, my worthy friend?" asked the major.

—Because not only do I know Spanish, but also Portuguese. I speak two languages instead of one!

“By my faith, I hadn’t thought of that,” replied Mac Nabbs. “My compliments, Paganel, my sincere compliments!”

Paganel was applauded, for he didn't miss a single bite. He ate and chatted all the while. But he failed to notice one detail that Glenarvan couldn't have missed: John Mangles's attentions to his neighbor, Mary Grant. A slight sign from Lady Helena to her husband told him that was "how it was!" Glenarvan looked at the two young people with affectionate sympathy and called out to John Mangles, but about something entirely different.

"And your journey, John," he asked him, "how did it turn out?"

"Under the best conditions," replied the captain. "However, I must inform you that we did not resume our journey through the Strait of Magellan."

"Well!" cried Paganel, "you rounded Cape Horn, and I wasn't there!"

—Hang yourselves! said the major.

"Selfish! You're giving me this advice just to get some of my rope!" replied the geographer.

"Now then, my dear Paganel," replied Glenarvan, "unless one possesses the gift of ubiquity, one cannot be everywhere. Now, since you were traversing the pampas plain, you could not at the same time round Cape Horn."

"That doesn't stop me from regretting it," replied the scholar.

But they didn't press him further, and left him with that answer. John Mangles then spoke again and recounted his voyage. Following the American coastline, he had observed all the western archipelagos without finding any trace of the *Britannia* . Arriving at Cape Pilares, at the entrance to the strait, and finding the winds against him, he turned south; the *Duncan* sailed along the islands of Desolation, ascended to the sixty-seventh degree of south latitude, rounded Cape Horn, passed Tierra del Fuego, and, passing through the Strait of Le Maire, followed the coast of Patagonia.

There, he encountered terrible gales off Cape Corrientes, the very same gales that so violently assailed the travelers during the storm. But

the yacht handled well, and for three days John Mangles had been sailing offshore, when the shots from the rifle signaled the arrival of the eagerly awaited travelers. As for Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant, the captain of the *Duncan* would be unfair in failing to acknowledge their remarkable intrepidity. The storm did not frighten them, and if they showed any fear, it was in thought of their friends, who were then wandering the plains of the Argentine Republic.

Thus ended John Mangles's account; it was followed by Lord Glenarvan's congratulations. Then, he addressed Mary Grant:

"My dear miss," he said, "I see that Captain John pays tribute to your great qualities, and I am happy to think that you are not displeased on board his ship!"

"How could it be otherwise?" replied Mary, looking at Lady Helena, and perhaps also at the young captain.

"Oh! My sister likes you very much, Mr. John," cried Robert, "and I like you too!"

"And I give it back to you, my dear child," replied John Mangles, a little disconcerted by Robert's words, which brought a slight blush to Mary Grant's forehead.

Then, shifting the conversation to a less contentious topic, John Mangles added:

"Now that I have finished recounting the voyage of the *Duncan* , would your honor be so kind as to give us some details about its crossing of America and the exploits of our young hero?"

No story could have been more agreeable to Lady Helena and Miss Grant. So Lord Glenarvan hastened to satisfy their curiosity. He recounted, incident by incident, his entire journey from one ocean to the other. The crossing of the Andes Mountains, the earthquake, Robert's disappearance, the condor's abduction, the gunshot at Thalcave, the episode with the red wolves, the young boy's devotion, Sergeant Manuel, the flood, the refuge on the *ombu* , the lightning, the fire, the caimans, the waterspout, the night on the Atlantic coast—these various details, some joyful, others terrifying, alternately stirred the delight and the dread of his listeners.

Many circumstances were reported which earned Robert the caresses of his sister and Lady Helena.

Never had a child been so well embraced, and by such enthusiastic friends.

When Lord Glenarvan had finished his story, he added these words:

"Now, my friends, let us think of the present; the past is past, but the future is ours; let us return to Captain Harry Grant."

Lunch was over; the guests returned to Lady Glenarvan's private drawing room; they took their places around a table laden with maps and plans, and the conversation began immediately.

“My dear Helena,” said Lord Glenarvan, “as we boarded the ship, I told you that if the survivors of the *Britannia* did not return with us, we had more hope than ever of finding them. Our journey through America has resulted in this conviction, or rather, this certainty:

The catastrophe did not occur on either the Pacific or Atlantic coasts. From this, the natural consequence is that the interpretation drawn from the document was erroneous with regard to Patagonia.

Fortunately, our friend Paganel, illuminated by a sudden inspiration, discovered the error. He demonstrated that we were on the wrong track, and he interpreted the document in such a way as to leave no room for doubt. This is the document written in French, and I will ask Paganel to explain it here, so that no one may retain the slightest doubt on this matter.

The scholar, ordered to speak, complied immediately; he discoursed on the words *gonie* and *indi* in the most convincing way; he rigorously extracted the word Australia from the word *austral* ; he demonstrated that Captain Grant, leaving the coast of Peru to return to Europe, could have, on a disabled ship, been carried by the southern currents of the Pacific to the Australian shores; finally, his ingenious hypotheses, his finest deductions, obtained the complete approval of John Mangles himself, a difficult judge in such matters, and who did not allow himself to be carried away by flights of imagination.

When Paganel had finished his dissertation, Glenarvan announced that the *Duncan* would immediately set sail for Australia.

However, before the order was given to head east, the major asked to make a simple observation.

"Speak, Mac Nabbs," replied Glenarvan.

“My aim,” said the major, “is not to weaken my friend Paganel’s arguments, much less to refute them; I find them serious, insightful,

worthy of our full attention, and they should rightly form the basis of our future research. But I wish them to be subjected to a final examination so that their value may be undeniable and uncontested.”

No one knew where the cautious Mac Nabbs was going with this, and his listeners listened to him with some anxiety.

“Go on, Major,” said Paganel. “I am ready to answer all your questions.”

“Nothing could be simpler,” said the major. “When, five months ago, in the Gulf of Clyde, we studied the three documents, their interpretation seemed obvious to us. No other coast than the west coast of Patagonia could have been the scene of the shipwreck. We didn’t have even the slightest doubt about it.”

"A very apt observation," replied Glenarvan.

—Later, continued the major, when Paganel, in a moment of providential distraction, embarked on our ship, the documents were submitted to him, and he approved without reservation our research on the American coast.

"I agree," replied the geographer.

"And yet, we were mistaken," said the major.

"We were mistaken," repeated Paganel. "But to be mistaken, Mac Nabbs, one only needs to be human, while he who persists in his error is a fool."

"Wait, Paganel," replied the major, "don't get worked up. I don't mean to say that our search should continue in America."

"So what are you asking for?" said Glenarvan.

—An admission, nothing more, the admission that Australia now appears to be the scene of the sinking of the *Britannia* as obviously as America once seemed to be.

"We readily admit it," replied Paganel.

“I take note of that,” the major continued, “and I take this opportunity to encourage you to question these successive and contradictory assertions. Who knows if, after Australia, another country will not offer us the same certainties, and if, these new searches having been carried out in vain, it will not seem ‘obvious’ that they must be repeated elsewhere?”

Glenarvan and Paganel looked at each other. The major's observations struck them as accurate.

“I therefore wish,” Mac Nabbs continued, “that one last test be carried out before setting sail for Australia. Here are the documents, here are the maps. Let us examine successively all the points through which the thirty-seventh parallel passes, and see if some other country might not be encountered, the precise location of which the document would indicate.”

"Nothing could be easier or quicker," replied Paganel, "because, fortunately, land is not abundant at this latitude."

"Let's see," said the major, unfolding an English planisphere, drawn according to the Mercator projection, which offered the eye the whole of the terrestrial globe.

The map was placed in front of Lady Helena, and everyone positioned themselves to follow Paganel's demonstration.

"As I have already told you," said the geographer, "after crossing South America, the thirty-seventh degree of latitude encounters the Tristan d'Acunha islands. Now, I maintain that not one of the words in the document can refer to these islands."

After scrupulously examining the documents, it had to be acknowledged that
Paganel was right.

Tristan d'Acunha was unanimously rejected.

“Let us continue,” the geographer resumed. “Leaving the Atlantic, we pass two degrees below the Cape of Good Hope, and we enter the Indian Ocean. Only one group of islands lies on our route, the Amsterdam Islands. Let us subject them to the same examination as Tristan d’Acunha.”

After careful consideration, the Amsterdam Islands were also excluded. No word, whole or in part, French, English, or German, applied to this group in the Indian Ocean.

“We now come to Australia,” Paganel continued; “the thirty-seventh parallel meets this continent at Cape Bernoulli; it exits through Twofold Bay. You will agree with me, and without forcing the texts, that the English word ' *stra'* and the French word ' *austral'* can be applied to Australia. The matter is obvious enough that I need not insist.”

Everyone agreed with Paganel's conclusion. This system brought together all the probabilities in its favor.

"Let's go further," said the major.

“Come now,” replied the geographer, “the voyage is easy. Leaving Twofold Bay, one crosses the arm of the sea that stretches east of Australia and reaches New Zealand. First of all, I will remind you that the word ‘ *contin* ’ in the French document indicates a ‘continent’ beyond any doubt. Captain Grant could not, therefore, have found refuge on New Zealand, which is merely an island. In any case, examine, compare, and turn the words over and over, and see if, by some impossible chance, they could possibly apply to this new land.”

"Not at all," replied John Mangles, who made a meticulous examination of the documents and the world map.

—No, said Paganel's listeners and the major himself, no, it cannot be New Zealand.

—Now, continued the geographer, over all this immense space which separates this great island from the American coast, the thirty-seventh parallel crosses only one arid and deserted islet.

"Whose name is it?" asked the major.

—Look at the map. It's Maria-Theresa, a name I can't find any trace of in the three documents.

"None," replied Glenarvan.

—So I leave it to you, my friends, to decide whether all the probabilities, not to say the certainties, are not in favour of the Australian continent?

*Duncan* unanimously .

—John, said Glenarvan then, do you have enough food and coal?

—Yes, Your Honor, I have amply supplied myself at Talcahuano, and, moreover, the city of Cape Town will allow us to renew our fuel very easily.

—Well then, give me directions…

"One more observation," said the major, interrupting his friend.

—Do it, Mac Nabbs.

—Whatever guarantees of success Australia offers us, wouldn't it be wise to stop for a day or two at the Tristan d'Acuña and Amsterdam Islands? They lie directly on our route and are not far from our course. We will then know if the *Britannia* left any trace of its shipwreck there.

"The incredulous major," cried Paganel, "he insists on it!"

—I am particularly keen not to backtrack if Australia, by chance, does not live up to the expectations it raises.

"That precaution seems wise to me," replied Glenarvan.

"And I won't dissuade you from taking it," replied Paganel. "On the contrary."

"Then, John," said Glenarvan, "set course for Tristan d'Acunha."

"At once, your honor," replied the captain, and he went back up on deck, while Robert and Mary Grant addressed the most heartfelt words of gratitude to Lord Glenarvan.

Soon the *Duncan* , moving away from the American coast and running east, cleaved the waves of the Atlantic Ocean with its swift bow.

## Chapter II *Tristan of Acuña*

If the yacht had followed the line of the equator, the one hundred and ninety-six degrees that separate Australia from America, or to put it better, Cape Bernoulli from Cape Corrientes, would have been worth eleven thousand seven hundred and sixty geographical miles.

But, at the thirty-seventh parallel, these one hundred and ninety-six degrees, due to the shape of the globe, represent only nine thousand four hundred and eighty miles. From the American coast to Tristan d'Acunha, the distance is two thousand one hundred miles, a distance John Mangles hoped to cover in ten days, if the easterly winds did not delay the yacht's progress. And indeed, he had good reason to be satisfied, for towards evening the breeze calmed considerably, then changed, and the *Duncan* was able to display all its incomparable qualities on a calm sea.

The passengers had resumed their ship's routines that very day. It didn't seem as though they had been away for a month. After the waters of the Pacific, the waters of the Atlantic stretched out before them, and, with a few minor differences, all the waves were alike. The elements, after having so terribly tested them, now joined forces to favor them. The ocean was calm, the wind was blowing in the right direction, and the entire set of sails, taut in the westerly breezes, assisted the tireless steam stored in the boiler.

This swift crossing was thus accomplished without accident or incident. The Australian coast was awaited with confidence. Probabilities were transformed into certainties. Captain Grant was spoken of as if the yacht were going to pick him up in a predetermined port.

Her cabin and the frames of her two companions were prepared on board. Mary Grant enjoyed arranging it herself, embellishing it. It had been given to her by Mr. Olbinett, who was currently sharing *Miss* Olbinett's room. This cabin was adjacent to the famous number six, reserved on board the *Scotia* by Jacques Paganel.

The learned geographer almost always kept himself shut up there. He worked from morning till night on a work entitled: *Sublime Impressions of a Geographer in the Argentine Pampasia* . He could be heard trying out his elegant sentences in a moved voice before committing them to the blank pages of his notebook, and more than once, unfaithful to Clio, the muse of history, he invoked in his transports the divine Calliope, who presides over great epic things.

Paganel, moreover, made no secret of it. The chaste daughters of Apollo willingly left the peaks of Parnassus or Helicon for him. Lady Helena offered him her sincere compliments.

The major also congratulated him on these mythological visits.

"But above all," he added, "no distractions, my dear Paganel, and if, by chance, you get the urge to learn Australian, don't go and study it in a Chinese grammar book!"

Things were going perfectly well on board. Lord and Lady Glenarvan watched John Mangles and Mary Grant with interest. They found nothing to criticize, and, frankly, since John didn't speak, it was best not to pay any attention to it.

"What will Captain Grant think?" Glenarvan said to Lady Helena one day.

"He will think that John is worthy of Mary, my dear Edward, and he will not be mistaken."

However, the yacht was making rapid progress towards its destination. Five days after losing sight of Cape Corrientes, on November 16th, fine westerly breezes arose, the very kind that ships rounding the African point readily tolerate against the steady southeasterly winds. The *Duncan* was covered with sails, and under her foresail, brigantine, topsail, topgallant sail, bonnets, jibs, and staysails, she ran on a port tack with daring speed. Her propeller barely touched the receding waters cut by her bow, and it seemed as if she were then battling with the racing yachts of the Royal Thames Club.

The next day, the ocean appeared covered with immense seaweed, resembling a vast pond choked with vegetation. It looked like one of those seas of sargassum formed from all the debris of trees and plants torn from neighboring continents. Commander Maury specifically drew their attention to these seafarers. The *Duncan* seemed to glide across a long prairie, which Paganel aptly compared to the pampas, and its progress was somewhat delayed.

Twenty-four hours later, at daybreak, the voice of the lookout sailor was heard.

"Land!" he shouted.

"In which direction?" asked Tom Austin, who was on watch.

"Downwind, to us," replied the sailor.

At this ever-moving cry, the yacht's deck suddenly filled with people. Soon a spyglass emerged from the quarterdeck and was immediately followed by Jacques Paganel. The scientist pointed his instrument in the indicated direction and saw nothing resembling land.

"Look up in the clouds," John Mangles told him.

"Indeed," replied Paganel, "it looks like a kind of peak, almost imperceptible yet."

"It's Tristan d'Acunha," John Mangles continued.

"Then, if I remember correctly," replied the scholar, "we must be eighty miles away, for the peak of Tristan, seven thousand feet high, is visible at that distance."

"Precisely," replied Captain John.

A few hours later, the group of very high and steep islands was clearly visible on the horizon. The conical peak of Tristan stood out in black against the resplendent sky, all variegated by the rays of the rising sun. Soon the main island emerged from the rocky mass, at the apex of a triangle tilted towards the northeast.

Tristan d'Acunha is located at 37° 8' south latitude and 10° 44' longitude west of the Greenwich meridian. Eighteen miles to the southwest, Inaccessible Island, and ten miles to the southeast,

Nightingale Island, complete this small isolated group in this part of the Atlantic.

Around noon, the two main landmarks used by sailors as points of reference were sighted: at one corner of Inaccessible Island, a rock that very closely resembles a sailing ship, and at the northern tip of Nightingale Island, two islets resembling a ruined fort. At three o'clock, the *Duncan* entered Falmouth Bay at Tristan d'Acunha, which is sheltered from westerly winds by Help Point or Bon-Secours Point.

There, some whalers were sleeping at anchor, busy fishing for seals and other marine animals, of which these coasts offer countless examples.

John Mangles set about finding a good anchorage, for these open roadsteads are very dangerous in the face of northwesterly and northerly gales, and it was precisely in this spot that the English brig *Julia* was lost with all hands in 1829. The *Duncan* approached within half a mile of the shore and anchored in twenty fathoms of water on a rocky bottom. Immediately, the passengers boarded the large boat and stepped onto the fine, black sand, the impalpable remnant of the island's scorched rocks.

The capital of the entire Tristan d'Acunha group consists of a small village situated at the back of the bay on a large, murmuring stream. There were about fifty fairly neat houses there, arranged with that geometric regularity that seems to be the epitome of English architecture. Behind this miniature town stretched fifteen hundred hectares of plains, bordered by an immense lava embankment; above this plateau, the conical peak rose seven thousand feet into the air.

Lord Glenarvan was received by a governor under the jurisdiction of the English Cape Colony. He immediately inquired about Harry Grant and the *Britannia* .

These names were completely unknown. The Tristan Islands of Aunha are beyond the shipping lanes and therefore sparsely frequented. Since the famous shipwreck of the *Blendon-Hall* , which struck the rocks of Inaccessible Island in 1821, two vessels had reached the main island: the *Primauguet* in 1845 and the American three-masted ship *Philadelphia* in 1857. Aunha's maritime disaster statistics were limited to these three catastrophes.

Glenarvan did not expect to find more precise information, and he only questioned the island's governor out of a sense of duty.

He even sent the ships from the shore to circumnavigate the island, whose circumference is at most seventeen miles. London or Paris would not fit on it, even if it were three times larger.

During this reconnaissance, the passengers of the *Duncan* strolled through the village and along the nearby coast. The population of Tristan d'Acuña numbers fewer than one hundred and fifty. They are English and American men married to Black women and Cape Khoikhoi women, who leave nothing to be desired in terms of ugliness. The children of these mixed households presented a most unpleasant blend of Saxon stiffness and African blackness.

This stroll of tourists, happy to feel solid ground beneath their feet, continued along the shore bordering the vast cultivated plain found only in this part of the island. Everywhere else, the coast is made up of

steep, barren lava cliffs. There, enormous albatrosses and dim-witted penguins number in the hundreds of thousands.

After examining these igneous rocks, the visitors made their way back up to the plain. Numerous springs, fed by the cone's eternal snows, murmured here and there. Green bushes, teeming with almost as many songbirds as flowers, brightened the ground. A single tree, a kind of leaf-leaved phyllo, twenty feet high, and the "tusseh," a gigantic, woody-stemmed arundinaceous plant, rose from the verdant pasture. A climbing acacia with prickly seeds, robust lomarias with tangled filaments, a few very hardy shrubby plants, ancerinas whose balsamic fragrance filled the breeze with penetrating scents, mosses, wild celery, and ferns formed a small but abundant flora. One sensed that an eternal spring was pouring its gentle influence upon this privileged island.

Paganel enthusiastically maintained that this was the famous Ogygia sung by Fénelon. He proposed to Lady Glenarvan that she seek a grotto, succeed the amiable Calypso, and asked no other employment for himself than to be "one of the nymphs who served her."

And so, chatting and admiring, the walkers returned to the yacht at nightfall; around the village herds of oxen and sheep grazed; fields of wheat, corn, and vegetables imported for forty years ago displayed their riches right into the streets of the capital.

Just as Lord Glenarvan was returning to his ship, the boats from the *Duncan* were joining the yacht.

They had circumnavigated the island in a few hours. No trace of the *Britannia* was found along their route. This circumnavigation therefore

produced no other result than to definitively remove Tristan Island from the search program.

The *Duncan* could then leave this group of African islands and continue its journey eastward.

If he did not leave that very evening, it was because Glenarvan authorized his crew to hunt the countless seals which, under the names of calves, lions, bears, and elephant seals, cluttered the shores of Falmouth Bay. Formerly, right whales frequented the waters around the island; but so many fishermen had pursued and harpooned them that hardly any remained.

Amphibians, on the other hand, were found there in herds. The yacht's crew resolved to spend the night chasing them away, and the following day gathering a large supply of oil.

Therefore, the departure of the *Duncan* was postponed until the day after tomorrow, November 20th.

During supper, Paganel shared some details about the Tristan Islands that interested his audience. They learned that this group, discovered in 1506 by the Portuguese explorer Tristan da Acuña, one of Albuquerque's companions, remained unexplored for over a century. These islands were considered, not without reason, storm havens and had no better reputation than Bermuda. Consequently, they were rarely approached, and no ship ever landed there without being driven ashore against its will by Atlantic hurricanes.

In 1697, three Dutch ships of the East India Company stopped there and determined its coordinates, leaving it to the great astronomer

Halley to review their calculations in the year 1700. From 1712 to 1767, some French navigators became aware of it, and mainly La Pérouse, whose instructions led him there during his famous voyage of 1785.

These islands, so little visited until then, had remained deserted when, in 1811, an American, Jonathan Lambert, undertook to colonize them. He and two companions landed there in January and bravely carried out their work as colonists. The English governor of the Cape of Good Hope, having learned of their prosperity, offered them the protectorate of England. Jonathan accepted and raised the British flag over his cabin. He seemed destined to reign peacefully over "his people," composed of an elderly Italian and a Portuguese mulatto, when, one day, while exploring the shores of his empire, he drowned, or was drowned—it is unclear which. 1816 arrived. Napoleon was imprisoned on Saint Helena, and, to better guard him, England established a garrison on Ascension Island and another on Tristan d'Acunha.

The garrison at Tristan consisted of a Cape artillery company and a detachment of Hottentots. It remained there until 1821, and, upon the death of the prisoner of Saint Helena, it was repatriated to the Cape.

“Only one European,” added Paganel, “a corporal, a Scotsman…”

"Ah! A Scotsman!" said the major, who was always of particular interest to his compatriots.

“His name was William Glass,” replied Paganel, “and he stayed on the island with his wife and two Khoikhoi (Hottentots). Soon, two Englishmen, a sailor and a Thames fisherman, a former dragoon in the

Argentine army, joined the Scotsman, and finally, in 1821, one of the survivors of the *Blendon Hall shipwreck* , accompanied by his young wife, found refuge on Tristan Island. So, in 1821, the island had six men and two women. By 1829, it had grown to seven men, six women, and fourteen children."

In 1835, the figure was forty, and now it has tripled.

"Thus begin nations," said Glenarvan.

During the night, the crew of the *Duncan* had a successful hunt, and about fifty large seals perished. Having authorized the hunt, Glenarvan could not prohibit the profit. The following day was therefore spent collecting the oil and preparing the pelts of these lucrative amphibians. The passengers naturally used this second day of rest to make another excursion to the island. Glenarvan and the major took their rifles with them to try their luck with the Acunhian game.

During this walk, we proceeded to the foot of the mountain, across ground strewn with decomposed debris, scoria, porous black lava, and all manner of volcanic waste. The base of the mountain emerged from a jumble of loose rocks. It was difficult to mistake the nature of the enormous cone, and the English captain Carmichael had been right to identify it as an extinct volcano.

The hunters spotted a few wild boars. One of them fell, struck by the major's bullet. Glenarvan contented himself with shooting several pairs of black-legged partridges, from which the ship's cook was to make an excellent salmis. A large number of goats were seen on the high plateaus.

As for the wild cats, proud, bold and robust, formidable even to dogs, they were numerous and promised to one day become very distinguished ferocious beasts.

At eight o'clock, everyone was back on board, and, during the night, the *Duncan* left Tristan d'Acunha Island, which it would never see again.

## Chapter III *Amsterdam Island*

John Mangles intended to run on coal at Cape Hope. He therefore had to deviate slightly from the 37th parallel and sail two degrees north. The *Duncan* was below the trade wind zone and encountered strong westerly breezes, very favorable to his progress. In less than six days, he covered the 1,300 miles separating Tristan d'Acunha from the tip of Africa. On November 24th, at 3:00 PM, Table Mountain was sighted, and a little later John sighted Signal Mountain, which marks the entrance to the bay. He reached it around 8:00 PM and dropped anchor in Cape Town harbor.

Paganel, as a member of the Geographical Society, could not have been unaware that the tip of Africa was first sighted in 1486 by the Portuguese admiral Bartolomeu Dias, and only rounded in 1497 by the famous Vasco da Gama. And how could Paganel have been unaware of this, since Camões sang the praises of the great navigator in his *Lusiads* ? But on this subject, he made a curious observation: if Diaz, in 1486, six years before Christopher Columbus's first voyage, had rounded the Cape of Good Hope, the discovery of America could have been indefinitely delayed. Indeed, the route around the Cape was the shortest and most direct way to reach the East Indies. Now, by sailing

west, what was the great Genoese navigator seeking, if not to shorten voyages to the land of spices?

So, once the cape was rounded, his expedition remained without purpose, and he probably would not have undertaken it.

The city of Cape Town, located at the bottom of Cape Bay, was founded in 1652 by the Dutchman Van Riebeck.

It was the capital of an important colony, which became definitively English after the treaties of 1815. The passengers of the *Duncan* took advantage of their stopover to visit it.

They only had twelve hours to spend on a walk, because one day was enough for Captain John to renew his supplies, and he wanted to leave again on the 26th, first thing in the morning.

That was all it took, moreover, to traverse the regular squares of this chessboard called Cape Town, on which thirty thousand inhabitants, some white and some black, play the roles of kings, queens, knights, pawns, and perhaps bishops. At least, that's how Paganel put it. Once you've seen the castle rising to the southeast of the city, the government house and gardens, the stock exchange, the museum, the stone cross erected by Bartolomeu Dias at the time of its discovery, and once you've drunk a glass of Pontai, the finest wine of Constance, there's nothing left to do but leave. And that's what the travelers did the next day, at daybreak. The *Duncan* set sail under its jib, staysail, foresail, topsail, and a few hours later it rounded that famous Cape of Storms, which the optimistic King of Portugal, John II, very clumsily named the Cape of Good Hope.

Two thousand nine hundred miles to cross between the Cape and Amsterdam Island, in calm seas and with a favorable breeze, was a matter of about ten days. The navigators, more favored than the travelers of the pampas, had no cause to complain about the elements. Air and water, conspiring against them on land, then joined forces to propel them forward.

“Ah! The sea! The sea!” Paganel repeated, “it is the field par excellence where human forces are exercised, and the ship is the true vehicle of civilization! Think about it, my friends. If the globe had been nothing but one immense continent, we would not even know a thousandth of it in the 19th century! Look at what happens in the interior of the great lands. In the steppes of Siberia, in the plains of Central Asia, in the deserts of Africa, in the prairies of America, in the vast plains of Australia, in the icy solitudes of the poles, man scarcely dares to venture there; the boldest retreats, the bravest succumbs. Passage is impossible. The means of transport are insufficient. The heat, diseases, the savagery of the natives—these are all insurmountable obstacles. Twenty miles of desert separate men more than five hundred miles of ocean!” We are neighbors from one coast to the other; strangers, if only a forest separates us!

England borders Australia, while Egypt, for example, seems millions of leagues from Senegal, and Beijing the antipodes of Saint Petersburg! The sea is now more easily crossed than the Sahara, and it is thanks to it, as an American scholar so aptly put it, that a universal kinship has been established between all parts of the world.

Paganel spoke with fervor, and the major himself could not find a single word to criticize in this hymn to the ocean. If finding Harry Grant

had required following the thirty-seventh parallel across a continent, the undertaking could not have been attempted; but the sea was there to carry the courageous seekers from one land to another, and, on December 6th, at the first light of day, it allowed a new mountain to emerge from the depths of its waves.

It was Amsterdam Island, located at 37° 47' latitude and 77° 24' longitude, whose high cone is visible from fifty miles away in clear weather. At eight o'clock, its still undetermined shape reproduced quite exactly the appearance of Tenerife.

"And consequently," said Glenarvan, "she resembles Tristan d'Acunha."

“Very judiciously concluded,” replied Paganel, “based on this geometric axiom, that two islands similar to a third are similar to each other. I would add that, like Tristan d’Acunha, Amsterdam Island is and has been equally rich in seals and Robinsons.”

"So there are Robinsons everywhere?" asked Lady Helena.

"My word, madam," replied Paganel, "I know few islands that have not had their adventure of this kind, and chance had already realized long before him the novel of your immortal compatriot, Daniel de Foe.

"Mr. Paganel," said Mary Grant, "will you allow me to ask you a question?"

—Two, my dear miss, and I promise to answer it.

"Well," the girl continued, "would you be very frightened at the idea of being abandoned on a desert island?"

"Me!" cried Paganel.

"Come now, my friend," said the major, "don't go and admit that it's your dearest wish!"

“I don’t claim that,” replied the geographer, “but, well, the adventure wouldn’t displease me too much. I would make a new life for myself. I would hunt, I would fish, I would make my home in a cave in winter, in a tree in summer; I would have stores for my harvests; in short, I would colonize my island.”

—Just you alone?

—All by myself, if need be. Besides, is one ever truly alone in the world? Can't one choose friends from among the animal kingdom, tame a young goat, an eloquent parrot, a amiable monkey? And if chance sends you a companion, like faithful Friday, what more could one ask for to be happy? Two friends on a rock, that's happiness! Imagine the major and me…

"Thank you," replied the major, "I have no taste for the roles of Robinson, and I would play them very badly."

“Dear Mr. Paganel,” replied Lady Helena, “there goes your imagination again, carrying you off into the realms of fantasy. But I believe reality is quite different from dreams. You only think of those imaginary Robinsons carefully cast upon a well-chosen island, and whom nature treats like spoiled children! You only see the beautiful side of things!”

—What! Madam, you don't think one can be happy on a desert island?

“I don’t believe it. Man is made for society, not for isolation. Solitude can only breed despair. It’s a matter of time. It’s possible that at first the worries of material life, the necessities of existence, might distract the

unfortunate man, barely rescued from the waves, that the necessities of the present might shield him from the threats of the future. But then, when he feels alone, far from his fellow human beings, without hope of ever seeing his country or those he loves again, what should he think, what should he suffer? His island is the whole world. All of humanity is contained within him, and when death arrives, a terrifying death in this abandonment, he is there like the last man on the last day of the world. Believe me, Monsieur Paganel, it’s better not to be that man!”

Paganel reluctantly yielded to Lady Helena's arguments, and the conversation continued in this way on the advantages and disadvantages of isolation, until the moment when the *Duncan* anchored a mile from the shore of Amsterdam Island.

This isolated group in the Indian Ocean consists of two distinct islands situated about thirty-three miles apart, and precisely on the meridian of the Indian peninsula; to the north is Amsterdam Island or Saint Peter; to the south, Saint Paul Island; but it is worth noting that they have often been confused by geographers and navigators.

These islands were discovered in December 1796 by the Dutchman Vlaming, then recognized by d'Entrecasteaux, who was then leading the *hope* and *research* for the discovery of La Pérouse.

It was during this voyage that the confusion between the two islands arose. The sailor Barrow, Beautemps-Beaupré in d'Entrecasteaux's atlas, and later Horsburg, Pinkerton, and other geographers, consistently described Île Saint-Pierre as Île Saint-Paul, and vice versa. In 1859, the officers of the Austrian frigate *Novara* , on its

circumnavigation voyage, avoided making this error, which Paganel was particularly keen to correct.

Saint Paul Island, located south of Amsterdam Island, is just an uninhabited islet, formed by a conical mountain that must be an ancient volcano.

Amsterdam Island, on the other hand, to which the longboat took the passengers of the *Duncan* , may be twelve miles in circumference. It is inhabited by a few voluntary exiles who have resigned themselves to this sad existence. They are the keepers of the fishery, which, like the island, belongs to a certain Mr. Otovan, a merchant from Réunion. This sovereign, who is not yet recognized by the major European powers, is building himself a personal fortune of seventy-five to eighty thousand francs by fishing, salting, and shipping a "cheilodactylus," less scientifically known as sea cod.

Moreover, this Amsterdam Island was destined to become and remain French. Indeed, it first belonged, by right of first occupancy, to M. Camin, a shipowner from Saint-Denis, Bourbon; then it was ceded, by virtue of some international contract, to a Pole, who had it cultivated by Malagasy slaves. To be Polish is to be French, so the island, once Polish, became French again in the hands of Monsieur Otovan.

When the *Duncan* docked on December 6, 1864, its population consisted of only three inhabitants: a Frenchman and two mulattoes, all three clerks of the merchant-owner. Paganel was thus able to shake hands with a fellow countryman in the person of the respectable Mr. Viot, then quite elderly. This "wise old man" showed him around his

island with great courtesy. It was a happy day for him to receive such kind strangers.

Saint-Pierre is frequented only by seal fishermen, rare whalers, people who are usually very rude, and who have not gained much from the company of sea dogs.

Mr. Viot presented his subjects, the two mulattoes; they constituted the entire living population of the island, with a few wild boars roaming inland and several thousand naive penguins. The small house where the three islanders lived was located at the end of a natural harbor in the southwest, formed by the collapse of a section of the mountain.

It was well before the reign of Otovan I that Saint Peter Island served as a refuge for shipwrecked people.

Paganel greatly interested his listeners by beginning his first story with these words: *Story of two Scotsmen abandoned on Amsterdam Island* .

It was 1827. The English ship *Palmira* , passing within sight of the island, saw smoke rising into the air. The captain approached the shore and soon saw two men signaling for help. He sent his boat ashore, where it picked up Jacques Paine, a twenty-two-year-old, and Robert Proudfoot, aged forty-eight. These two unfortunate men were unrecognizable. For eighteen months, almost without food, almost without fresh water, living on shellfish, fishing with a poor, bent nail, occasionally catching a wild boar piglet, going up to three days without eating, keeping watch like vestal virgins by a fire lit with their last piece of tinder, never letting it go out and carrying it on their excursions as a most precious possession, they had lived in such misery, deprivation,

and suffering. Paine and Proudfoot had been brought ashore on the island by a schooner that was fishing for seals. Following the fishermen's custom, they were to stock up on pelts and oil for a month while waiting for the schooner to return. The schooner never came back.

Five months later, the *Hope* , which was going to Van-Diemen, came to land on the island; but its captain, by one of those barbaric whims that nothing explains, refused to receive the two Scotsmen; he left without leaving them either a biscuit or a lighter, and certainly the two unfortunate men would have died before long, if the *Palmira* , passing in sight of Amsterdam Island, had not taken them on board.

The second adventure mentioned in the history of Amsterdam Island —if such a rock can have a history at all—is that of Captain Péron, a Frenchman this time. This adventure, moreover, begins and ends like that of the two Scotsmen: a voluntary stopover on the island, a ship that doesn't return, and a foreign vessel that the vagaries of the winds carry to this group after forty months of abandonment. However, a bloody tragedy marked Captain Péron's stay and bears curious resemblances to the fictional events that awaited Daniel Defoe's hero upon his return to his island.

Captain Péron had landed with four sailors, two English and two French; he was to spend fifteen months hunting sea lions. The hunt was successful; but when, after fifteen months, the ship did not reappear, and when provisions gradually dwindled, international relations became strained. The two Englishmen mutinied against Captain Péron, who would have perished at their hands had it not been for the aid of his compatriots. From that moment on, the two sides, watching each

other night and day, constantly armed, alternately victorious and vanquished, led a dreadful existence of misery and anguish. And certainly, one would have ended up annihilating the other, had not some English ship rescued these unfortunate men, divided by a wretched question of nationality, on a rock in the Indian Ocean.

Such were these adventures. Twice Amsterdam Island became the home of abandoned sailors, whom Providence twice saved from misery and death. But since then, no ship had been lost on those shores. A shipwreck would have cast its wreckage ashore; shipwrecked sailors would have reached Monsieur Viot's fishing weirs. Now, the old man had lived on the island for many years, and never had the opportunity to extend his hospitality to victims of the sea. He knew nothing of the *Britannia* or Captain Grant. Neither Amsterdam Island nor Saint Paul's Islet, which whalers and fishermen often visited, had been the scene of this catastrophe.

Glenarvan was neither surprised nor saddened by his reply. He and his companions, during these various stops, were looking for where Captain Grant wasn't, not where he was. They simply wanted to confirm his absence from these different points along the parallel. The *Duncan 's departure* was therefore decided for the following day.

Towards evening, after a pleasant walk, Glenarvan bid farewell to the honest Mr. Viot. Each wished him all the happiness possible on his deserted islet. In return, the old man offered his best wishes for the expedition's success, and the *Duncan 's boat* brought its passengers back on board.

## Chapter IV *The bets of Jacques Paganel and Major Mac Nabbs*

On December 7th, at three o'clock in the morning, the *Duncan 's stoves* were already roaring; the capstan was heaved; the anchor came in sharply, left the sandy bottom of the small harbor, was raised to the davit, the propeller started turning, and the yacht put to sea. When the passengers came aboard at eight o'clock, Amsterdam Island was disappearing into the mists on the horizon. It was the last leg of the journey along the thirty-seventh parallel, and three thousand miles separated it from the Australian coast. If the westerly wind held steady for another twelve days, if the sea remained favorable, the *Duncan* would reach the end of its voyage.

Mary Grant and Robert gazed with emotion at the waves that the *Britannia* had likely been sailing just days before its shipwreck. There, perhaps, Captain Grant, his ship already disabled and his crew reduced, was battling the fearsome hurricanes of the Indian Ocean and felt himself being driven toward the shore with an irresistible force. John Mangles showed the young woman the currents indicated on the ship's charts; he explained their consistent direction. One of them, among others, the Indian Ocean Cross Current, carries the ship to the Australian continent, and its influence is felt from west to east in the Pacific as much as in the Atlantic. Thus, the *Britannia* , stripped of its masts and its rudder, that is to say, defenseless against the violence of the sea and sky, must have run aground and been wrecked there.

However, a difficulty arose here. The last news from Captain Grant was from Callao, May 30, 1862, according to the *Mercantile and Shipping Gazette . How could the Britannia* , on June 7, eight days after leaving the coast of Peru, have been in the Indian Ocean? Paganel,

consulted on this matter, gave a very plausible answer, one that would have satisfied even the most skeptical.

It was an evening, December 12, six days after leaving Amsterdam Island. Lord and Lady Glenarvan, Robert and Mary Grant, Captain John, Mac Nabbs and Paganel were chatting on the quarterdeck.

As was customary, they spoke of the *Britannia* , for it was the sole thought on board. However, the aforementioned difficulty was raised incidentally, and had the immediate effect of halting their progress on this path of hope.

Paganel, at Glenarvan's unexpected remark, sharply raised his head. Then, without replying, he went to fetch the document. When he returned, he simply shrugged, like a man ashamed to have been momentarily detained by such a "misery."

"Well, my dear friend," said Glenarvan, "but at least give us an answer."

"No," replied Paganel, "I will only ask one question, and I will address it to Captain John."

"Speak, Mr. Paganel," said John Mangles.

—Can a fast-sailing ship cross the entire part of the Pacific Ocean between America and Australia in one month?

—Yes, by doing two hundred miles in twenty-four hours.

—Is this an extraordinary walk?

—Not at all. Sailing clippers often achieve higher speeds.

—Well, Paganel continued, instead of reading "June 7" on the document, suppose that the sea has eroded a digit of that date, read "June 17" or "June 27", and everything is explained.

"Indeed," replied Lady Helena, "from May 31st to June 27th..."

"Captain Grant was able to cross the Pacific and reach the Indian Ocean!"

A strong sense of satisfaction greeted Paganel's conclusion

.

"Another point clarified!" said Glenarvan, "and thanks to our friend. Now all that remains is for us to reach Australia and search for traces of the *Britannia* on its western coast."

“Or its eastern coast,” said John Mangles.

"Indeed, you're right, John. Nothing in the document indicates that the disaster occurred on the western shores rather than the eastern ones. Our research must therefore focus on these two points where Australia is bisected by the thirty-seventh parallel."

"So, *my lord* ," said the young girl, "there is doubt in this regard?"

“Oh! No, miss,” John Mangles hastened to reply, eager to allay Mary Grant’s fears. “Her honor will surely point out that if Captain Grant had landed on the eastern shores of Australia, he would have found help and assistance almost immediately. That entire coast is, so to speak, English and populated by settlers. The crew of the *Britannia* didn’t have to go ten miles to encounter fellow countrymen.”

"Very well, Captain John," replied Paganel. "I agree with you. On the eastern coast, at Twofold Bay, in the town of Eden, Harry Grant would not only have received asylum in an English colony, but he would also have had ample means of transport to return to Europe."

—So, said Lady Helena, the shipwrecked were unable to find the same resources in this part of Australia towards which the *Duncan* is taking us?

“No, madam,” replied Paganel, “the coast is deserted. No communication route connects it to Melbourne or Adelaide. If the *Britannia* was lost on the reefs that border it, all help was lacking, as if it had been wrecked on the inhospitable beaches of Africa.”

"But then," asked Mary Grant, "what has become of my father in the last two years?"

"My dear Mary," replied Paganel, "you are certain, are you not, that Captain Grant reached Australian soil after his shipwreck?"

"Yes, Mr. Paganel," replied the young girl.

"Well, once on this continent, what became of Captain Grant? There aren't many possibilities. They boil down to three. Either Harry Grant and his companions reached the English colonies, or they fell into the hands of the natives, or finally, they became lost in the vast wilderness of Australia."

Paganel fell silent, and sought in the eyes of his listeners an approval of his system.

"Continue, Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan.

"I will continue," replied Paganel; "and first, I reject the first hypothesis. Harry Grant could not have reached the English colonies, for his safety was assured, and he would have long since been with his children in his good city of Dundee."

"Poor father!" murmured Mary Grant, "separated from us for two years!"

"Let Monsieur Paganel speak, my sister," said Robert, "he will eventually teach us…"

—Alas! No, my boy! All I can say for certain is that Captain Grant is a prisoner of the Australians, or…

"But these natives," Lady Glenarvan asked sharply, "are they...?"

“Rest assured, madam,” replied the scholar, who understood Lady Helena’s thoughts. “These natives are savage, brutish, at the lowest rung of human intelligence, but gentle in nature, and not bloodthirsty like their neighbors in New Zealand. If they took the survivors of the *Britannia prisoner* , they never threatened their lives, you can believe me. All travelers agree that Australians abhor bloodshed, and many times they have found in them faithful allies to repel attacks from bands of convicts, who are far more cruel.”

"You hear what Mr. Paganel is saying," Lady Helena continued, addressing Mary Grant. "If your father is in the hands of the natives, which the document suggests he is, we will find him."

"And if he is lost in this vast country?" replied the young girl, whose gaze questioned Paganel.

"Well!" exclaimed the geographer confidently, "we will find him again! Won't we, my friends?"

“No doubt,” replied Glenarvan, wanting to give the conversation a less gloomy tone. “I don’t allow us to get lost…”

"Neither do I," replied Paganel.

"Is Australia big?" asked Robert.

—Australia, my boy, has something like seven hundred and seventy-five million hectares, which is to say four-fifths the size of Europe.

"That long?" said the major.

—Yes, Mac Nabbs, within a yard. Do you believe that such a country has the right to be called a "continent" as the document describes it?

—Indeed, Paganel.

"I would add," the scholar continued, "that few travelers are cited as having been lost in this vast country. I even believe that Leichardt is the only one whose fate is unknown, and I had even been informed at the geographical society, some time before my departure, that MacIntyre believed he had found his trail."

"Hasn't Australia been explored in all its parts?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

“No, madam,” replied Paganel, “far from it! This continent is no better known than the interior of Africa, and yet, it is not for lack of enterprising travelers. From 1606 until 1862, more than fifty, both inland and along the coasts, worked to explore Australia.”

"Oh! Fifty," said the major, looking doubtful.

—Yes! Mac Nabbs, just as much. I hear talk of the sailors who charted the Australian shores amidst the dangers of unknown navigation, and of the travelers who ventured across that continent.

"Nevertheless, fifty is a lot," replied the major.

"And I will go further, Mac Nabbs," continued the geographer, still excited by the contradiction.

—Go further, Paganel.

—If you challenge me, I will name those fifty names without hesitation.

"Oh!" said the major calmly. "That's what scientists are like! They doubt nothing."

—Major, said Paganel, will you bet your Purdey Moore and Dickson rifle against my Secretan spyglass?

"Why not, Paganel, if it pleases you?" replied Mac
Nabbs.

"Good! Major," cried the scholar, "here is a rifle with which you will hardly kill any more chamois or foxes, unless I lend it to you, which I will always do with pleasure!"

"Paganel," replied the major seriously, "whenever you need my spyglass, it will always be at your disposal."

“Let’s begin then,” replied Paganel. “Ladies and gentlemen, you make up the gallery that judges us. You, Robert, will score the points.”

Lord and Lady Glenarvan, Mary and Robert, Major John Mangles, who were amused by the discussion, prepared to listen to the geographer. It was, after all, Australia, toward which the *Duncan was taking them* , and his story could not have been more timely. Paganel was therefore invited to begin his mnemonic devices without delay.

“Mnemosyne!” he cried, “goddess of memory, mother of the chaste muses, inspire your faithful and fervent worshipper! Two hundred and fifty-eight years ago, my friends, Australia was still unknown. The existence of a great southern continent was suspected; two maps preserved in the library of your British Museum, my dear Glenarvan, and dated 1550, mention a land south of Asia, which they call the Great Java of the Portuguese. But these maps are not sufficiently reliable. I therefore come to the 17th century, to 1606. In that year, a Spanish navigator, Quiros, discovered a land which he named Australia de Espiritu Santo. Some authors have claimed that this was the New Hebrides group, and not Australia. I will not argue the matter. Count this Quiros, Robert, and let us move on to another.”

—One, said Robert.

In the same year, Luiz Vaz de Torres, second-in-command of Quiros's fleet, continued exploring the new lands further south. But the honor of the great discovery belongs to the Dutchman Theodoric Hertoge. He landed on the west coast of Australia at 25 degrees latitude and named it *Eendracht* , after his ship. After him, navigators multiplied. In 1618, Zeachen explored the lands of Arnheim and Diemen on the northern

coast. In 1619, Jean Edels extended and named a portion of the west coast after himself. In 1622, Leuwin sailed down to the cape that would later bear his name. In 1627, De Nuitz and De Witt, one to the west, the other to the south, completed the discoveries of their predecessors, and were followed by Commander Carpenter, who entered with his ships this vast indentation still known as the Gulf of Carpentaria. Finally, in 1642, the famous navigator Tasman rounded Van Diemen's Island, which he believed to be connected to the mainland, and named it after the Governor-General of Batavia, a name that posterity, more accurately, has changed to Tasmania. By then, the Australian continent had been circumnavigated; it was known that the Indian and Pacific Oceans surrounded it with their waters, and, in 1665, the name New Holland, which it would not retain, was imposed on this large southern island, precisely at the time when the role of Dutch navigators was drawing to a close. How many of us are there?

"At ten," replied Robert.

“Very well,” Paganel continued, “I’ll cross that off and move on to the English. In 1686, a buccaneer chief, a Brethren of the Coast, one of the most famous freebooters of the South Seas, William Dampier, after many adventures filled with both pleasure and hardship, arrived aboard the ship *Cygnet* on the northwest shore of New Holland at 16 degrees 50 latitude; he communicated with the natives and gave a very complete description of their customs, their poverty, and their intelligence. He returned in 1689 to the very bay where Hertoge had landed, no longer as a freebooter, but as commander of the *Roebuck* , a Royal Navy vessel. Until then, however, the discovery of New Holland had held no other interest than that of a geographical fact.” Little

thought was given to colonizing it, and for three-quarters of a century, from 1699 to 1770, no navigator set foot on its shores. But then appeared the most illustrious sailor in the world, Captain Cook, and the new continent soon opened its doors to European emigration. During his three famous voyages, James Cook landed on the shores of New Holland, first on March 31, 1770. After having successfully observed the transit of Venus across the sun from Tahiti, Cook launched his small ship, the *Endeavour,* into the western Pacific Ocean. Having sighted New Zealand, he arrived in a bay on the west coast of Australia, and he found it so rich in new plants that he named it Botany Bay. This is present-day *Botany Bay* . His interactions with the somewhat brutish natives were of little interest. He sailed north, and at 16 degrees latitude, near Cape Tribulation, the *Endeavour* ran aground on a coral reef, eight leagues from the coast. The danger of sinking was imminent. Provisions and cannons were thrown overboard; but the following night the tide refloated the lighter ship, and it did not sink because a piece of coral, lodged in the opening, sufficiently blocked its leak. Cook was able to steer his vessel to a small cove where a river flowed, which was named Endeavour. There, for the three months their repairs lasted, the English tried to establish useful communications with the natives; but they had little success and set sail again. The *Endeavour* continued its journey north. Cook wanted to know if a strait existed between New Guinea and New Holland; After further perils, after sacrificing his ship twenty times, he sighted the sea, which opened wide to the southwest. The strait existed. It was crossed. Cook landed on a small island, and, taking possession in the name of England of the long stretch of coastline he had explored, he gave it the very British name of New South Wales. Three years later, the intrepid sailor commanded the *Adventure* and the

*Resolution* ; Captain Furneaux went on the *Adventure* to explore the coast of Van Diemen's Land, and returned assuming it was part of New Holland. It was only in 1777, during his third voyage, that Cook anchored with his ships the *Resolution* and the *Discovery* in Adventure Bay on Van Diemen's Land, and it was from there that he sailed to the Sandwich Islands, where he died a few months later.

"He was a great man," said Glenarvan.

—The most illustrious sailor who ever lived. It was Banks, his companion, who suggested to the English government the idea of founding a colony at Botany Bay. After him, navigators from all nations set sail. In the last letter received from La Pérouse, written from Botany Bay and dated February 7, 1787, the unfortunate sailor announced his intention to visit the Gulf of Carpentaria and the entire coast of New Holland as far as Van Diemen's Land. He left and never returned. In 1788, Captain Philipp established the first English colony at Port Jackson. In 1791, Vancouver recorded a considerable voyage along the southern coasts of the new continent. In 1792, d'Entrecasteaux, sent to search for La Pérouse, circumnavigated New Holland, west and south, discovering unknown islands along his route. In 1795 and 1797, Flinders and Bass, two young men, bravely continued their exploration of the southern coasts in an eight-foot boat, and in 1797, Bass sailed between Van Diemen's Land and New Holland through the strait that now bears his name. That same year, Vlaming, the discoverer of Amsterdam Island, explored the Swan River on the eastern shores, where black swans of the finest breed frolicked. As for Flinders, he resumed his inquisitive explorations in 1801, and at 138° 58' longitude and 35° 40' latitude, he encountered, in Encounter Bay, the *Géographe*

and the *Naturaliste* , two French ships commanded by Captains Baudin and Hamelin.

—Ah! Captain Baudin? said the major.

—Yes! Why the exclamation? asked Paganel.

—Oh! Nothing. Carry on, my dear Paganel.

—I therefore continue by adding to the names of these navigators that of Captain King, who, from 1817 to 1822, completed the reconnaissance of the intertropical coasts of New Holland.

—That makes twenty-four names, said Robert.

"Well," replied Paganel, "I already have half of the major's rifle. And now that I'm done with the sailors, let's move on to the travelers."

"Very well, Mr. Paganel," said Lady Helena. "You must admit you have an astonishing memory."

"What is quite peculiar," added Glenarvan, "in such a man..."

"So absentminded," Paganel hastened to say. "Oh! I only have a memory of dates and facts. That's all."

"Twenty-four," repeated Robert.

“Well, twenty-five, Lieutenant Daws. That was in 1789, a year after the colony was established at Port Jackson. They had circumnavigated the New World; but what it contained, no one could have said. A long line of mountains parallel to the eastern shore seemed to block all access to the interior. Lieutenant Daws, after nine days' march, had to

turn back and return to Port Jackson. During the same year, Captain Tench tried to cross this high range, but could not succeed. These two failures discouraged travelers from resuming this difficult task for three years. In 1792, Colonel Paterson, a daring African explorer nonetheless, failed in the same attempt. The following year, a simple quartermaster in the English navy, the courageous Hawkins, went twenty miles beyond the line that his predecessors had been unable to cross." For eighteen years, I have only two names to mention: those of the famous mariner Bass and Mr. Bareiller, an engineer in the colony, who were no more fortunate than their predecessors. I come now to the year 1813, when a passage was finally discovered west of Sydney. Governor Macquarie ventured there in 1815, and the town of Bathurst was founded beyond the Blue Mountains. From that moment on, Throsby in 1819, Oxley, who crossed three hundred miles of land, Howel and Hune, whose starting point was precisely Twofold Bay, where the thirty-seventh parallel passes, and Captain Sturt, who, in 1829 and 1830, explored the courses of the Darling and the Murray, enriched geography with new facts and contributed to the development of the colonies.

—Thirty-six, said Robert.

"Perfect! I'm ahead of schedule," replied Paganel. "I mention for the record Eyre and Leichardt, who travelled a portion of the country in 1840 and 1841; Sturt, in 1845; the brothers Gregory and Helpmann, in 1846, in Western Australia; Kennedy, in 1847, on the Victoria River, and, in 1848, in Northern Australia; Gregory, in 1852; Austin, in 1854; the Gregorys, from 1855 to 1858, in the northwest of the continent; Babbage, from Lake Torrens to Lake Eyre, and I finally come to a famous traveller in Australian history, Stuart, who traced his audacious routes

across the continent three times." His first expedition into the interior was in 1860. Later, if you wish, I will tell you how Australia was crossed four times from south to north. Today, I will simply complete this long list, and, from 1860 to 1862, I will add to the names of so many bold pioneers of science those of the Dempster brothers, Clarkson and Harper, Burke and Wills, Neilson, Walker, Landsborough, Mackinlay, Howit…

"Fifty-six!" exclaimed Robert.

"Good! Major," Paganel continued, "I'll do you a favor, because I haven't mentioned Duperrey, Bougainville, FitzRoy, De Wickam, or Stokes..."

"Enough," said the major, overwhelmed by the number.

“Neither Peru, nor Quoy,” continued Paganel, launched like an express, “nor
Bennett, nor Cuningham, nor Nutchell, nor Tiers…

-Grace!…

—Neither Dixon, nor Strelesky, nor Reid, nor Wilkes, nor Mitchell…

"Stop, Paganel," said Glenarvan, laughing heartily, "don't overwhelm the unfortunate Mac Nabbs. Be generous!" He admitted defeat.

"And his rifle?" asked the geographer triumphantly.

"It's yours, Paganel," replied the major, "and I'm very sorry to see it go. But you have a memory that could fill an entire artillery museum."

“It is certainly impossible,” said Lady Helena, “to know her Australia better. Neither the smallest name, nor the smallest fact…”

—Oh! The smallest fact! said the major, shaking his head.

"Hey! What is it, Mac Nabbs?" cried Paganel.

—I am saying that you may not all be aware of the incidents relating to the discovery of Australia.

—For example! said Paganel with a supreme movement of pride.

—And if I name one that you don't know, will you give me back my rifle? asked Mac Nabbs.

—Right now, Major.

—Deal done?

—Deal concluded.

—Good. Do you know, Paganel, why Australia doesn't belong to France?

—But, it seems to me…

—Or, at the very least, what reason do the English give for it?

"No, Major," replied Paganel, looking annoyed.

—It is simply because Captain Baudin, who was not timid, was so frightened in 1802 by the croaking of Australian frogs that he raised the anchor as quickly as possible and fled, never to return.

"What!" exclaimed the scholar, "Do they say that in England? That's a bad joke!"

"Very bad, I admit," replied the major, "but it is historic in the United Kingdom."

"This is an outrage!" exclaimed the patriotic geographer. "And this is happening again, seriously?"

"I am forced to admit it, my dear Paganel," replied Glenarvan amidst a burst of general laughter. "What! You were unaware of this peculiarity?"

—Absolutely. But I protest! Besides, the English call us "frog eaters!" Now, generally, we are not afraid of what we eat.

"That's no less true, Paganel," replied the major, smiling modestly.

And that is how this famous rifle belonging to Purdey Moore and Dickson remained the property of Major Mac Nabbs.

## Chapter V *The Furies of the Indian Ocean*

Two days after this conversation, John Mangles, having given his position at noon, announced that the *Duncan* was at 113° 37' longitude. The passengers consulted the ship's chart and saw, not without great satisfaction, that they were barely five degrees from Cape Bernoulli.

Between this cape and Pointe d'Entrecasteaux, the Australian coastline forms an arc subtended by the thirty-seventh parallel. Had the *Duncan then* sailed towards the equator, it would have quickly become aware of Cape Chatham, which lay one hundred and twenty miles to its

north. It was then sailing in that part of the Indian Ocean sheltered by the Australian continent.

It was therefore hoped that, within four days, Cape Bernoulli would rise again on the horizon.

The west wind had hitherto favored the yacht's progress; but for the past few days it had shown a tendency to diminish; little by little, it calmed. On December 13th, it died down completely, and the inert sails hung limply along the masts.

The *Duncan* , without its powerful propeller, would have been chained by the calms of the ocean.

This atmospheric condition could last indefinitely. That evening, Glenarvan discussed it with John Mangles. The young captain, watching his coal bunkers empty, seemed quite upset by the wind's sudden drop. He had covered his ship with sails, hoisted his bonnets and staysails to take advantage of the slightest breezes; but, as the sailors say, there wasn't enough to fill a hat.

"In any case," said Glenarvan, "we shouldn't complain too much; better no wind than a headwind."

“Your honor is correct,” replied John Mangles; “but precisely, these sudden calms bring about changes in the weather. Therefore, I dread them; we are sailing on the edge of the monsoons which, from October to April, blow from the northeast, and if they catch us, our progress will be greatly delayed.”

"What do you want, John? If this setback were to occur, we would have to accept it. It would only be a delay, after all."

—No doubt, if the storm didn't interfere.

"Are you worried about bad weather?" said Glenarvan, examining the sky, which, however, from the horizon to the zenith, appeared free of clouds.

"Yes," replied the captain, "I say it in your honor, but I would not want to frighten Lady Glenarvan or Miss Grant."

—And you are acting wisely. What is it?

—Definite threats of rough weather. Do not trust the appearance of the sky, *my lord* . Nothing is more deceptive. For two days now, the barometer has been falling alarmingly; it is currently at twenty-seven inches. This is a warning I cannot ignore. Now, I particularly fear the fury of the Southern Ocean, for I have already experienced its effects. The vapors that condense in the immense glaciers of the South Pole create a draft of extreme violence. From this arises a struggle between polar and equatorial winds that creates cyclones, tornadoes, and those various forms of storms against which a ship cannot fight without being at a disadvantage.

“John,” replied Glenarvan, “the *Duncan* is a sturdy vessel, its captain a skilled sailor. Let the storm come, and we will know how to defend ourselves!”

John Mangles, in expressing his fears, was obeying his seafaring instincts. He was a skilled weatherman, an English expression that applies to those who observe the weather. The persistent drop in the barometer prompted him to take every precautionary measure on board.

He expected a violent storm which the state of the sky did not yet indicate, but his infallible instrument could not deceive him; atmospheric currents rush from places where the column of mercury is high to those where it falls; the closer these places are, the more quickly the level is restored in the air layers, and the greater the speed of the wind.

John remained on deck all night. Around eleven o'clock, the sky clouded over in the south. John brought everyone upstairs and lowered his small sails; he kept only his foresail, his brigantine, his topsail, and his jibs. At midnight, the wind freshened. It was a gale, meaning the air molecules were being driven at a speed of six fathoms per second. The creaking of the masts, the flapping of the running rigging, the sharp sound of the sails sometimes caught in the bolt ropes, the groaning of the interior bulkheads, taught the passengers what they did not yet know. Paganel, Glenarvan, the major, and Robert appeared on deck, some curious, others ready to act.

In the sky they had left clear and starry, thick clouds rolled, separated by bands spotted like a leopard's skin.

"The hurricane?" Glenarvan simply asked John Mangles.

"Not yet, but soon," replied the captain.

At that moment, he gave the order to reef the topsail. The sailors rushed into the wind's wind shadows and, not without difficulty, reduced the sail's area by furling it with its reefing lines around the lowered yard. John Mangles was keen to keep as much sail as possible, in order to support the yacht and smooth its rolling motion.

Then, these precautions taken, he gave orders to Austin and the boatswain to prepare for the onslaught of the hurricane, which could not be long in unleashing its fury. The lifeboat lashings and the mooring lines of the dinghy were doubled. The side tackles of the cannon were reinforced. The shrouds and backstays were tightened. The hatches were sealed.

John, like an officer on the crest of a breach, did not leave the windward edge, and from the top of the quarterdeck he tried to wrest his secrets from that stormy sky.

At that moment, the barometer had fallen to twenty-six inches, a drop which rarely occurs in the barometric column, and the *storm-glass* indicated the storm.

It was one o'clock in the morning. Lady Helena and Miss Grant, violently shaken in their cabin, ventured out onto the deck. The wind was then traveling at fourteen fathoms per second. It whistled violently through the rigging. These metal ropes, like those of a musical instrument, resonated as if some gigantic bow had caused their rapid oscillations; the pulleys clashed; the lines ran with a sharp noise in their rough grooves; the sails rattled like artillery pieces; already monstrous waves rushed to assault the yacht, which tossed and turned like a halcyon on their foaming crest.

When Captain John spotted the female passengers, he quickly went to them and asked them to return to the quarterdeck; waves were already rolling in, and the deck could be swept away at any moment. The crashing of the elements was so loud then that Lady Helena could barely hear the young captain.

"There is no danger?" she was able to tell him during a slight lull.

"None, madam," replied John Mangles; "but you cannot remain on the bridge, nor can you, Miss Mary."

Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant did not resist an order that resembled a prayer, and they retreated below the quarterdeck just as a wave, breaking over the stern, rattled the hatch windows in their compartments. At that moment, the wind intensified; the masts bent under the pressure of the sails, and the yacht seemed to rise above the waves.

"Load the foresail!" shouted John Mangles; "bring in the topsail and the jibs!"

The sailors rushed to their stations; the halyards were cast off, the cargoes weighed, the jibs hauled down with a noise that dominated that of the sky, and the *Duncan* , whose funnel vomited torrents of black smoke, struck the sea unevenly with the branches sometimes emerging from its propeller.

Glenarvan, the major, Paganel and Robert watched with admiration mixed with dread this struggle of the *Duncan* against the waves; they clung tightly to the railings without being able to exchange a single word, and watched the flocks of satanic petrels, those funereal storm birds, playing in the unleashed winds.

At that moment, a deafening hiss rose above the sounds of the hurricane. Steam shot out violently, not from the exhaust pipe, but from the boiler valves; the alarm whistle sounded with unusual force; the yacht listed terrifyingly, and Wilson, who was at the helm, was thrown

overboard by an unexpected jolt. The *Duncan* was broadside to the waves and could no longer be steered.

"What is it?" cried John Mangles, rushing onto the gangway.

"The ship is listing!" replied Tom Austin.

—Are we out of our depth?

"To the machine! To the machine!" cried the engineer's voice.

John rushed to the engine and slumped down the ladder. A cloud of steam filled the chamber; the pistons were motionless in the cylinders; the connecting rods imparted no movement to the crankshaft. At that moment, the engineer, seeing their efforts were futile and fearing for his boilers, closed the intake and let the steam escape through the exhaust pipe.

"What is it?" asked the captain.

"The propeller is bent, or jammed," replied the mechanic; "it no longer works."

—What? It's impossible to free it?

-Impossible."

This was not the time to try to remedy this accident; there was an undeniable fact:

The propeller could not work, and the steam, no longer working, had escaped through the valves.

John therefore had to return to his sails, and seek an ally in this wind which had become his most dangerous enemy.

He went back up, and briefly explained the situation to Lord Glenarvan; then he urged him to return to the quarterdeck with the other passengers, Glenarvan wanted to stay on the deck.

“No, Your Honor,” replied John Mangles firmly, “I must be alone here with my crew. Go back! The ship may enter the water and the waves would sweep you away without mercy.”

—But we can be useful…

"Go back, go back, *my lord* , you must! There are circumstances where I am the master of the ship! Withdraw, I demand it!"

For John Mangles to speak with such authority, the situation had to be supreme.

Glenarvan understood that it was up to him to set an example of obedience. He therefore left the bridge, followed by his three companions, and joined the two passengers, who were anxiously awaiting the outcome of this struggle with the elements.

"What an energetic man my brave John is!" said Glenarvan, entering the square.

—Yes, replied Paganel, he reminded me of that bosseman from your great Shakespeare, when he cries out in the drama of *the storm* , to the king he is carrying on board:

"Get out of here! Silence! To your huts! If you cannot silence these elements, be quiet! Out of my way, I tell you!"

However, John Mangles wasted no time in extricating the ship from the perilous situation created by its jammed propeller. He resolved to heave to in order to deviate as little as possible from his course. This involved keeping the sails up and reefing them obliquely, so as to present a beam reach to the storm. The topsail was set with a reefed mainsail, a sort of staysail on the forestay of the mainmast, and the helm was put to leeward.

The yacht, endowed with great nautical qualities, moved like a swift horse sensing the spur, and it exposed itself to the encroaching waves. Would such a reduced sail area hold? It was made of the best canvas from Dundee; but what fabric can withstand such violence?

This way of heading had the advantage of presenting the strongest parts of the yacht to the waves, and keeping it on its original course.

However, it was not without peril, for the ship could become caught in the immense gaps between the waves and not recover. But John Mangles had no choice but to maneuver, and he resolved to heave to until the masts and sails came down. His crew stood there before him, ready to go wherever his presence was needed. John, tied to the shrouds, watched the raging sea.

The rest of the night passed in this situation. It was hoped that the storm would subside by daybreak.

Vain hope. Around eight o'clock in the morning, it blew again, and the wind, with a speed of eighteen fathoms per second, became a hurricane.

John said nothing, but he trembled for his ship and those on board. The *Duncan* was listing terribly; its stanchions creaked, and sometimes

the foremast booms lashed the crests of the waves. There was a moment when the crew thought the yacht would not right itself. Already the sailors, axes in hand, were rushing forward to cut the shrouds of the mainmast, when the sails, torn from their bolt ropes, flew off like gigantic albatrosses.

The *Duncan* righted itself; but, without support from the waves, without direction, it was tossed about terribly, to the point that the masts threatened to break right down to their bases. It could not long withstand such a rolling motion; it was straining in its upper reaches, and soon its planks, coming apart, its seams bursting, would give way to the waves.

John Mangles had only one option left: to set a storm jib and flee from the approaching time. He succeeded after several hours of work, repeatedly undone before it was finally completed. It wasn't until three o'clock in the evening that the staysail could be hoisted onto the foremast forestay and left to the wind's force.

So, under that piece of canvas, the *Duncan* let itself drift and began to run downwind with incredible speed. It was heading northeast, where the storm was driving it. It had to maintain as much speed as possible, for its safety depended on it alone. Sometimes, overtaking the waves carried with it, it sliced through them with its sleek bow, plunging into them like an enormous whale, and letting its deck be swept from fore to stern. At other times, its speed equaled that of the waves, its rudder lost all power, and it lurched wildly, threatening to throw it broadside. Finally, it also happened that the waves, driven by the hurricane, ran faster than it; they would then leap over the stern, and the entire deck would be swept from stern to bow with irresistible force.

It was in this alarming situation, amidst alternating hope and despair, that the day of December 15th and the following night passed. John Mangles did not leave his post for a moment; he took no food; he was tormented by fears that his impassive face refused to betray, and his gaze stubbornly sought to pierce the mists that had gathered in the north.

Indeed, he had every reason to fear anything. The *Duncan* , thrown off course, was racing towards the Australian coast with an unstoppable speed. John Mangles also sensed, instinctively and otherwise, that a current of lightning was dragging it along.

At every moment, he dreaded striking a reef and shattering the yacht into a thousand pieces. He estimated that the coast should not be encountered closer than twelve miles to leeward. But land meant shipwreck, the loss of a vessel.

A hundred times better is the vast ocean, against whose fury a ship can defend itself, even if it means yielding to it. But when the storm throws it onto land, it is lost.

John Mangles went to see Lord Glenarvan; he spoke to him privately; he described the situation to him without diminishing its gravity; he considered it with the cool-headedness of a sailor ready for anything, and ended by saying that he might be forced to run the *Duncan* aground.

"To save those he carries, if possible, *my lord* ."

"Do it, John," replied Glenarvan.

—And Lady Helena? Miss Grant?

—I will only inform them at the last moment, when all hope of holding the sea is lost. You will warn me.

"I will warn you, *my lord* ."

Glenarvan returned to the passengers, who, without knowing the full extent of the danger, sensed its imminence.

They displayed great courage, at least equal to that of their companions. Paganel indulged in the most ill-timed theories about the direction of atmospheric currents; he made interesting comparisons to Robert, who was listening, between tornadoes, cyclones, and straight-line storms. As for the major, he awaited the end with the fatalism of a Muslim. Around eleven o'clock, the hurricane seemed to weaken somewhat, the damp mists dissipated, and, in a brief clearing, John could see a low-lying land six miles downwind. He was heading straight for it. Monstrous waves were crashing down to a prodigious height, up to fifty feet and more. John understood that they were finding a solid foothold there to rebound from such a height.

"There are sandbanks," he told Austin.

"That's my opinion," replied the second.

"We are in God's hands," John continued.

If he does not offer *Duncan a playable pass* , and if he does not lead him there himself, we are lost.

—The tide is high right now, Captain, perhaps we can get through these sandbanks?

"But look, Austin, at the fury of these waves. What ship could withstand them? Let us pray to God that He helps us, my friend!"

However, the *Duncan* , under its storm jib, was bearing down on the coast with terrifying speed. Soon it was only two miles from the edge of the bank. The vapors constantly obscured the land.

Nevertheless, John thought he glimpsed a calmer basin beyond this foamy edge. There, the *Duncan* would have found itself in relative safety.

But how do we get through?

John brought his passengers up on deck; he didn't want them to be confined to the quarterdeck when the ship sank. Glenarvan and his companions gazed at the terrifying sea. Mary Grant paled.

"John," Glenarvan said quietly to the young captain, "I will try to save my wife, or I will perish with her. Take care of Miss Grant."

"Yes, Your Honor," replied John Mangles, bringing the lord's hand to his moist eyes.

The *Duncan* was now only a few cables' lengths from the foot of the sandbanks. The high tide would undoubtedly have left enough water under the yacht's keel to allow it to cross these treacherous shallows. But then the enormous waves, lifting and dropping it in turn, would inevitably cause it to run aground. Was there, then, any way to soften the movements of these waves, to facilitate the gliding of their liquid molecules, in short, to calm this tumultuous sea?

John Mangles had one last idea.

"Oil!" he cried; "my children, spin oil! Spin oil!"

These words were quickly understood by the entire crew. It involved using a method that sometimes works: calming the fury of the waves by covering them with a sheet of oil. This sheet floats on the surface and dampens the impact of the water, lubricating it. The effect is immediate, but it is short-lived.

When a ship crossed this artificial sea, its fury intensified, and woe to anyone who dared to follow in its wake. The barrels containing the supply of seal oil were hoisted onto the forecastle by the crew, whose strength was a hundredfold in the face of danger. There, they were smashed open with axes and hung above the starboard and port bulwarks.

"Hold on!" shouted John Mangles, waiting for the opportune moment.

In twenty seconds, the yacht reached the entrance to the channel blocked by a roaring tidal bore. This was the moment.

"God forbid!" cried the young captain.

The barrels capsized, and streams of oil gushed from their sides. Instantly, the smooth slick leveled, as it were, the foaming surface of the sea. The *Duncan* flew over the calmed waters and soon found itself in a peaceful basin, beyond the treacherous shoals.

## Chapter VI *Cape Bernoulli*

John Mangles' first priority was to securely set his ship on two anchors. He anchored in five fathoms of water. The bottom was good, a hard gravel that provided excellent holding. Therefore, there was no fear of dragging anchor or running aground at low tide. The *Duncan* , after so many perilous hours, found itself in a kind of cove sheltered by a high, circular point against the open sea winds.

Lord Glenarvan shook the young captain's hand, saying,
"Thank you, John."

And John felt generously rewarded with those two words alone. Glenarvan kept his anxieties a secret, and neither Lady Helena, nor Mary Grant, nor Robert suspected the gravity of the perils they had just escaped.

One important point remained to be clarified. Where on the coast had the *Duncan* been driven by this formidable storm? Where would it resume its usual course? How far to the southwest was Cape Bernoulli still to be reached? These were the first questions put to John Mangles. He immediately took his bearings and plotted his observations on the ship's chart.

In short, the *Duncan* had not deviated too much from its course: by barely two degrees. It was at 136° 12' longitude and 35° 07' latitude, at Cape Catastrophe, located at one of the points of South Australia, and three hundred miles from Cape Bernoulli.

Cape Catastrophe, with its ominous name, has Cape Borda as its counterpart, formed by a promontory of Kangurooo Island. Between these two capes opens the Investigator Strait, which leads to two fairly

deep gulfs, one to the north, Spencer Gulf, the other to the south, St. Vincent Gulf.

On the eastern coast of this island lies the port of Adelaide, capital of the province of South Australia. Founded in 1836, this city has forty thousand inhabitants and offers fairly comprehensive resources. However, it is more preoccupied with cultivating its fertile soil, harvesting its grapes and oranges, and all its agricultural bounty, than with creating large industrial enterprises. Its population includes fewer engineers than farmers, and the general inclination is not much towards commercial operations or the mechanical arts.

the *Duncan* repair its damage? That was the question to be decided. John Mangles wanted to know the truth. He had a dive carried out on the stern of the yacht; his divers reported that one of the propeller shafts had been bent and was bearing against the sternpost, thus preventing it from rotating. This damage was deemed serious, serious enough to require equipment not available in Adelaide.

Glenarvan and Captain John, after careful consideration, made the following decision: the *Duncan* would sail around the Australian coast, searching for traces of the *Britannia* ; it would stop at Cape Bernoulli, where the latest information would be taken, and continue south to Melbourne, where its damage could be easily repaired.

With the propeller repaired, the *Duncan* would cruise along the eastern coasts to complete its series of searches.

This proposal was approved. John Mangles resolved to take advantage of the first favorable wind to set sail. He didn't have to wait long. Towards evening, the hurricane had completely subsided. A

manageable breeze took its place, blowing from the southwest. Preparations were made for departure. Fresh sails were set. At four o'clock in the morning, the sailors heaved at the capstan. Soon the anchor was down, it dragged, and the *Duncan* , under her foresail, topsail, topgallant sail, jibs, brigantine, and topsail, ran close-hauled on a starboard tack, upwind of the Australian shores.

Two hours later, he lost sight of Cape Catastrophe and found himself abeam of Investigator Strait. That evening, Cape Borda was rounded, and Kangaroo Island was sighted a few cables' lengths ahead. It is the largest of the small Australian islands and serves as a refuge for fugitive exiles. Its appearance was enchanting. Immense carpets of green covered the stratified rocks of its shores. As in the time of its discovery in 1802, countless herds of *kangaroos could be seen* bounding through the woods and across the plains.

The next day, while the *Duncan* was racing from side to side, its boats were sent ashore with orders to visit the coastal outcrops.

He was then on the thirty-sixth parallel, and, up to the thirty-eighth, Glenarvan did not want to leave a point unexplored.

During the day of December 18th, the yacht, which was pitching and rolling like a true clipper under its fully unfurled sails, skimmed the shore of Encounter Bay. It was there that, in 1828, the explorer Sturt arrived after discovering the Murray, the largest river in South Australia. These were no longer the verdant shores of Kangaroo Island, but barren hills, occasionally breaking the uniformity of a low, jagged coastline, here and there some gray cliffs, or sand headlands—in short, all the aridity of a polar continent.

The boats performed admirably during this voyage.
The sailors did not complain.

Glenarvan, his inseparable companion Paganel, and young Robert almost always accompanied them. They wanted to search for any remains of the *Britannia with their own eyes* . But this meticulous exploration revealed nothing of the shipwreck. The Australian shores were as silent on the matter as the Patagonian lands. However, all hope could not be lost until the precise location indicated by the document was reached. This was done out of an abundance of caution, and to leave nothing to chance. During the night, the *Duncan* would heave to, so as to remain in place as long as possible, and during the day, the coastline was carefully searched.

Thus, on December 20th, they arrived via Cape Bernoulli, which marks the end of Lacépède Bay, without having found the slightest wreck. But this failure proved nothing against the captain of the *Britannia* .

Indeed, in the two years since the disaster, the sea had been able, indeed must have been able, to scatter and erode the remains of the three-masted ship, tearing them from the reef. Moreover, the natives, who sense shipwrecks like a vulture senses a corpse, must have gathered up even the smallest fragments. Then, Harry Grant and his two companions, taken prisoner as the waves cast them ashore, had undoubtedly been swept inland.

But then one of Jacques Paganel's ingenious hypotheses fell apart. As long as the territory remained Argentine, the geographer could rightfully claim that the figures in the document referred not to the site

of the shipwreck, but to the very place of captivity. Indeed, the great rivers of the Pampas, with their numerous tributaries, were there to carry the precious document to the sea. Here, on the contrary, in this part of Australia, the waterways that cross the thirty-seventh parallel are few; moreover, the Rio Colorado and the Rio Negro flow into the sea through deserted, uninhabited, and uninhabited beaches, while the main Australian rivers—the Murray, the Yarra, the Torrens, the Darling—either flow into one another or rush into the ocean through mouths that have become busy harbors, ports where shipping is active. What were the chances, then, that a fragile bottle could have traveled down these constantly traversed waters and reached the Indian Ocean?

This impossibility could not escape discerning minds. Paganel's hypothesis, plausible in Patagonia in the Argentine provinces, would therefore have been illogical in Australia. Paganel acknowledged this in a discussion initiated on the subject by Major Mac Nabbs. It became clear that the degrees mentioned in the document applied only to the site of the shipwreck, and that consequently the bottle had been thrown into the sea at the spot where the *Britannia broke up* , on the west coast of Australia.

However, as Glenarvan rightly observed, this definitive interpretation did not rule out the possibility of Captain Grant's captivity. He, moreover, hinted at it in his document with these words, which had to be taken into account: " *where they will be prisoners of cruel natives* ." But there was no longer any reason to search for the prisoners on the thirty-seventh parallel rather than elsewhere.

This long-debated question thus received its definitive solution, and had the following consequences: if no traces of the *Britannia* were

found at Cape Bernoulli, Lord Glenarvan would have no choice but to return to Europe. His search would have been fruitless, but he had fulfilled his duty courageously and conscientiously.

This deeply saddened the yacht's passengers and filled Mary and Robert Grant with despair. As they made their way to shore with Lord and Lady Glenarvan, John Mangles, Mac Nabbs, and Paganel, the captain's two children believed that the question of their father's safety was about to be irrevocably decided. Irrevocably, indeed, for Paganel, in a previous discussion, had astutely demonstrated that the shipwrecked sailors would have been repatriated long ago had their vessel been wrecked on the reefs of the eastern coast.

"Hope! Hope! Always hope!" Lady Helena repeated to the young girl, who sat beside her in the boat taking them ashore. "God's hand will not abandon us!"

"Yes, Miss Mary," said Captain John, "it is when men have exhausted their human resources that heaven intervenes, and, by some unforeseen event, opens new paths for them."

"God hear you, Mr. John!" replied Mary Grant.

The shore was now only a cable's length away; it ended with fairly gentle slopes at the tip of the cape which extended two miles into the sea.

The boat landed in a small natural cove between coral banks in the process of forming, which, given time, should form a belt of reefs in the southern part of Australia.

As they already were, they were enough to destroy the hull of a ship, and the *Britannia* could have been lost there with all hands.

The passengers of the *Duncan* disembarked without difficulty on a completely deserted shore. Layered cliffs formed a coastline sixty to eighty feet high. It would have been difficult to scale this natural barrier without ladders or crampons. John Mangles, fortunately, very opportunely discovered a breach half a mile to the south, created by a partial collapse of the cliff. The sea, no doubt, battered this barrier of friable tufa during its great equinoctial storms, thus causing the upper portions of the massif to fall.

Glenarvan and his companions entered the trench and reached the top of the cliff by a rather steep slope. Robert, like a young cat, climbed a very sheer bank and was the first to reach the crest, much to the despair of Paganel, who was humiliated to see his long, forty-year-old legs defeated by the short legs of a twelve-year-old. However, he left the placid major far behind, who had no other desire for such a result.

The small group, soon assembled, examined the plain that stretched out before them. It was a vast, uncultivated land with bushes and scrub, a barren region, which Glenarvan compared to the *glens* of the Scottish lowlands, and Paganel to the infertile moors of Brittany. But if this land appeared uninhabited along the coast, the presence of man—not the savage, but the industrious—was revealed in the distance by a few promising buildings.

"A mill!" exclaimed Robert.

Three miles away, in fact, the sails of a windmill were turning in the wind.

"It is indeed a mill," replied Paganel, who had just focused his spyglass on the object in question. "Here is a small monument, as modest as it is useful, whose sight has the privilege of enchanting my eyes."

"It's almost a bell tower," said Lady Helena.

—Yes, madam, and if one grinds the bread of the body, the other grinds the bread of the soul. From this point of view they are still alike.

"Let's go to the mill," replied Glenarvan.

We set off. After half an hour's walk, the land, worked by human hands, revealed a new aspect. The transition from barren wilderness to cultivated countryside was abrupt. Instead of scrubland, hedgerows surrounded a recently cleared enclosure; a few oxen and half a dozen horses grazed in meadows enclosed by sturdy acacia trees from the vast nurseries of Kangurooo Island. Gradually, fields covered with grain appeared, along with several acres of land bristling with golden ears of corn, haystacks standing like large beehives, orchards with cool fences, a beautiful garden worthy of Horace, where pleasure mingled with utility, then sheds, outbuildings neatly arranged, and finally a simple and comfortable dwelling, which the cheerful windmill overlooked with its pointed gable and caressed with the shifting shadow of its large sails.

At that moment, a man of about fifty, with a kindly countenance, emerged from the main house, accompanied by the barking of four large dogs that announced the arrival of strangers. Five handsome and strong boys, his sons, followed him with their mother, a tall and robust woman. There was no mistaking it: this man, surrounded by his valiant family, amidst these still-new buildings, in this almost untouched

countryside, presented the quintessential Irish settler who, weary of the miseries of his homeland, had come seeking fortune and happiness across the seas.

Glenarvan and his family had not yet introduced themselves, they had not had time to state their names or their qualities, when these cordial words were already greeting them:

"Strangers, welcome to the home of Paddy O'Moore."

"Are you Irish?" said Glenarvan, taking the hand that the colonist offered him.

“I used to be,” replied Paddy O’Moore. “Now I’m Australian. Come in, whoever you are, gentlemen, this house is yours.”

There was nothing to do but accept, without ceremony, an invitation made so graciously. Lady Helena and Mary Grant, led by *Mistress* O'Moore, entered the house, while the settler's sons relieved the visitors of their weapons.

A large, cool and bright room occupied the ground floor of the house built of strong horizontally arranged beams. A few wooden benches riveted to the walls painted in cheerful colors, a dozen stools, two oak chests where white earthenware and shiny pewter jugs were displayed, a wide and long table at which twenty guests could have sat comfortably, formed furnishings worthy of the solid house and its robust inhabitants.

Lunch was served. The tureen was steaming between the roast beef and the leg of mutton, surrounded by large plates of olives, grapes and oranges; the essentials were there; the superfluous was not lacking.

The host and hostess had such an inviting air, the table so vast and laden with tempting food, that it would have been improper not to sit down. Already the farm servants, their master's equals, were coming to share their meals. Paddy O'Moore gestured to the place reserved for the guests.

"I was expecting you," he said simply to Lord Glenarvan.

"You?" he replied, quite surprised.

"I'm still waiting for those who come," replied the Irishman.

Then, in a deep voice, while his family and servants stood respectfully, he recited grace. Lady Helena was deeply moved by such perfect simplicity of manner, and a look from her husband told her that he admired her as much as she did.

The meal was a celebration. The conversation flowed freely. From Scots to Irish, there's only a hand's breadth. The Tweed, a few fathoms wide, cuts a deeper chasm between Scotland and England than the twenty leagues of the Irish Channel that separate old Caledonia from the Emerald Isle. Paddy O'Moore told his story.

This was the fate of all emigrants whom poverty drives from their country. Many come seeking fortune abroad, only to find disappointment and misfortune. They blame luck, forgetting to blame their own lack of intelligence, laziness, and vices. Whoever is sober and courageous, thrifty and brave, succeeds.

Such was and such was Paddy O'Moore. He left Dundalk, where he was starving, took his family to the Australian outback, landed in Adelaide, scorned the work of the miner for the less unpredictable toils

of the farmer, and, two months later, he began his farm, so prosperous today.

The entire territory of South Australia is divided into portions of eighty acres each. These various lots are granted to settlers by the government, and from each lot a hardworking farmer can earn a living and put aside a net sum of eighty pounds sterling.

Paddy O'Moore knew this. His agricultural knowledge served him well. He lived, he saved, and acquired new plots with the profits from the first. His family prospered, and so did his farm. The Irish farmer became a landowner, and although his settlement was not yet two years old, he already owned five hundred acres of land he had cultivated himself, and five hundred head of cattle. He was his own master, having once been a slave to the Europeans, and as independent as one can be in the freest country in the world.

His hosts responded to this story from the Irish emigrant with sincere and frank congratulations.

Paddy O'Moore, his story finished, waited, no doubt for confidences to be shared, but without provoking them. He was one of those discreet people who say: this is who I am, but I don't ask who you are. Glenarvan, on the other hand, had an immediate interest in talking about the *Duncan* , its presence at Cape Bernoulli, and the research it was pursuing with tireless perseverance. But, like a man who goes straight to the point, he first questioned Paddy O'Moore about the sinking of the *Britannia* .

The Irishman's response was not favorable. He had never heard of this ship. For two years, no vessel had been lost on the coast, neither

above nor below the cape. Yet, the disaster had occurred only two years prior. He could therefore state with absolute certainty that the shipwrecked survivors had not been cast ashore on this part of the western coast.

"Now, *my lord* ," he added, "I would like to ask you what interest you have in asking me this question."

Then Glenarvan told the colonist the story of the document, the voyage of the yacht, the attempts made to find Captain Grant; he did not hide that his dearest hopes fell before such clear assertions, and that he despaired of ever finding the survivors of the *Britannia* .

Such words were bound to make a painful impression on Glenarvan's listeners. Robert and Mary were there, listening, their eyes brimming with tears. Paganel could find no word of consolation or hope. John Mangles suffered a pain he could not alleviate. Despair was already engulfing the souls of these kind men whom the *Duncan* had just carried, to no avail, to those distant shores, when these words were heard:

" *My lord* , praise and thank God. If Captain Grant is alive, he is alive on Australian soil!"

## Chapter VII *Ayrton*

The surprise these words produced cannot be described.
Glenarvan jumped up and, pushing back his seat:

"Who is speaking like that?" he exclaimed.

"Me," replied one of Paddy O'Moore's servants, sitting at the end of the table.

"You, Ayrton!" said the colonist, no less astonished than Glenarvan.

“Me,” replied Ayrton in a voice that was moved but firm, “me, a Scot like you, *my lord* , me, one of the survivors of the *Britannia!* ”

This statement produced an indescribable effect.

Mary Grant, half-swooning with emotion, half-dying with happiness, this time surrendered herself into Lady Helena's arms. John Mangles, Robert, and Paganel, leaving their seats, rushed towards the man whom Paddy O'Moore had just named Ayrton.

He was a man of forty-five, with a rugged face, whose very bright gaze was lost beneath a deeply sunken eyebrow.

His vigor must have been uncommon, despite his lean physique. He was all bone and sinew, and, according to a Scottish expression, he didn't waste his time making fat.

His average height, broad shoulders, determined bearing, and intelligent, energetic face, though his features were somewhat harsh, all spoke in his favor. The sympathy he inspired was further heightened by the marks of recent hardship etched on his face. One could see that he had suffered greatly, though he appeared a man capable of enduring suffering, braving it, and overcoming it.

Glenarvan and his friends had sensed that at first sight.

Ayrton's personality was immediately apparent.

Glenarvan, speaking for everyone, pressed him with questions, which Ayrton answered. The meeting between Glenarvan and Ayrton had clearly produced a mutual emotion in both of them.

So Glenarvan's first questions came in quick succession, without order, and as if against his will.

"Are you one of the survivors of the *Britannia shipwreck* ?" he asked.

"Yes, *my lord* , Captain Grant's quartermaster," replied
Ayrton.

—Saved with him after the shipwreck?

—No, *my lord* , no. At that terrible moment, I was separated, taken from the ship's deck, and thrown onto the shore.

—So you are not one of the two sailors mentioned in the document?

—No. I wasn't aware of the existence of this document. The captain threw it overboard when I was no longer on board.

—But the captain? The captain?

—I thought he had drowned, disappeared, gone down with the entire crew of the *Britannia* . I thought I had survived alone.

—But you said Captain Grant was alive!

—No. I said: if the captain is alive…

—You added: he is on the Australian continent!…

—He can only be there, indeed.

—So you don't know where he is?

—No, *my lord* , I repeat, I believed him buried in the waves or wrecked on the rocks. You are the one telling me that perhaps he still lives.

"But what do you know?" asked Glenarvan.

—That's all. If Captain Grant is alive, he's in Australia.

"Where did the shipwreck take place?" said Major Mac Nabbs.

That was the first question to ask, but in the confusion caused by this incident, Glenarvan, eager to know above all where Captain Grant was, did not inquire about the whereabouts of the *Britannia* . From that moment on, the conversation, hitherto vague, illogical, proceeding in leaps and bounds, skimming over subjects without delving into them, mixing up facts, and switching dates, took on a more reasonable air, and soon the details of this obscure story appeared clear and precise to the minds of his listeners.

To the question posed by Mac Nabbs, Ayrton replied in these terms:

"When I was pulled from the forecastle where I was hauling the jib down, the *Britannia* was running towards the coast of Australia. It wasn't two cables away. The shipwreck therefore took place right there."

—At thirty-seven degrees latitude? asked John Mangles.

"By thirty-seven degrees," replied Ayrton.

—On the west coast?

"No, not! On the east coast," the quartermaster replied sharply.

—And at what time?

—On the night of June 27, 1862.

"That's it! That's exactly it!" cried Glenarvan.

"So you see, *my lord* ," added Ayrton, "that I was right to say: if Captain Grant is still alive, he is to be found on the Australian continent, not elsewhere."

“And we will seek him, and we will find him, and we will save him, my friend!” cried Paganel. “Ah! precious document,” he added with perfect naiveté, “you must admit that you have fallen into the hands of some very perceptive people!”

No one, no doubt, heard Paganel's flattering words. Glenarvan and Lady Helena, Mary and Robert had crowded around Ayrton.

They shook his hands. It seemed that this man's presence was a sure guarantee of Harry Grant's safety. Since the sailor had escaped the dangers of the shipwreck, why shouldn't the captain have emerged unscathed from this catastrophe? Ayrton often repeated that Captain Grant must be alive, just like him. Where, he couldn't say, but certainly on this continent. He answered the thousand questions that assailed him with remarkable intelligence and precision. Miss Mary, while he spoke, held one of his hands in hers. This sailor was a comrade of her father's, one of the *Britannia's crew!* He had lived near Harry Grant, sailing the seas with him, braving the same dangers!

Mary could not tear her eyes away from that harsh face and wept with happiness.

Until now, no one had thought to question the veracity and identity of the quartermaster.

Only the major, and perhaps John Mangles, less quick to surrender, wondered whether Ayrton's words deserved complete trust. His unexpected encounter might arouse some suspicion.

Certainly, Ayrton had cited facts and dates that corroborated each other, striking details. But details, however accurate, do not constitute certainty, and generally, as has been observed, a lie is reinforced by the precision of its details. Mac Nabbs therefore reserved his opinion and refrained from commenting.

As for John Mangles, his doubts did not long withstand the sailor's words, and he considered him a true companion of Captain Grant when he heard him speak to the young girl about his father.

Ayrton knew Mary and Robert very well. He had seen them in Glasgow when the *Britannia departed* . He mentioned their presence at the farewell luncheon given on board for the captain's friends. Sheriff MacIntyre was also in attendance.

Robert, who was barely ten years old, had been entrusted to the care of Dick Turner, the boatswain, and he escaped from him to climb to the top of the topgallant sail.

"That's true, that's true," said Robert Grant.

And Ayrton would recall a thousand little details, without seeming to attach the importance that John Mangles gave them. And when he paused, Mary would say to him in her sweet voice:

"Again, Mr. Ayrton, tell us more about our father!"

The quartermaster did his best to satisfy the girl's wishes. Glenarvan did not want to interrupt him, and yet twenty more useful questions crowded in his mind; but Lady Helena, showing him Mary's joyful emotion, stopped him in his tracks.

It was during this conversation that Ayrton recounted the story of the *Britannia* and its voyage across the Pacific Ocean. Mary Grant knew much of it, as news from the ship went back to May 1862. During this year-long period, Harry Grant landed at the principal islands of Oceania. He called at the Hebrides, New Guinea, New Zealand, and New Caledonia, encountering often unjustified claims and suffering the ill will of the English authorities, as his ship was reported in the British colonies. However, he had found an important point on the west coast of Papua; there, the establishment of a Scottish colony seemed easy and its prosperity assured; indeed, a good port of call on the route to the Moluccas and the Philippines was bound to attract ships, especially once the cutting of the Suez Canal would eliminate the route around the Cape of Good Hope. Harry Grant was among those in England who advocated the work of M. De Lesseps and did not let political rivalries cloud a great international interest.

After this reconnaissance of Papua New Guinea, the *Britannia* went to resupply at Callao, and left that port on May 30, 1862, to return to Europe via the Indian Ocean and the Cape route. Three weeks after its

departure, a terrible storm crippled the ship. It ran aground. The masts had to be cut. A leak developed in the bilge, which could not be plugged. The crew was soon exhausted, at the end of their strength. The pumps could not be freed. For eight days, the *Britannia* was at the mercy of hurricanes. There were six feet of water in its hold. It was sinking little by little. The lifeboats had been swept away during the storm. They were going to perish on board when, on the night of June 27, as Paganel had perfectly understood, the eastern shore of Australia was sighted. Soon the ship ran aground. A violent collision occurred. At that moment, Ayrton, swept away by a wave, was thrown into the breakers and lost consciousness. When he came to, he was in the hands of the natives, who dragged him inland. From then on, he heard nothing more of the *Britannia* and supposed, not without reason, that he had perished with all hands on the treacherous reefs of Twofold Bay. Here ended the tale concerning Captain Grant. It provoked more than one painful exclamation. The major could not, without injustice, have doubted its authenticity. But, after the story of the *Britannia* , Ayrton's particular story was to be of even greater immediate interest. Indeed, Grant, it was beyond doubt, thanks to the document, had survived the shipwreck with two of his sailors, as had Ayrton himself. From the fate of one, one could reasonably infer the fate of the other. Ayrton was therefore invited to recount his adventures.

It was very simple and very short.

The shipwrecked sailor, a prisoner of a native tribe, was taken to the inland regions watered by the Darling River, some four hundred miles north of the thirty-seventh parallel. There, he lived in abject poverty, for the tribe itself was impoverished, but he was not mistreated. These

were two long years of agonizing slavery. However, the hope of regaining his freedom remained in his heart.

He was on the lookout for any opportunity to escape, even though his flight would throw him into the midst of countless dangers.

One night in October 1864, he eluded the locals and vanished deep into the heart of vast forests. For a month, living on roots, edible ferns, and mimosa gum, he wandered through these immense wildernesses, navigating by day by the sun and by night by the stars, often overcome by despair. He crossed marshes, rivers, and mountains, traversing all that uninhabited portion of the continent that only a few travelers had ever explored on their daring journeys. Finally, dying and exhausted, he arrived at the hospitable homestead of Paddy O'Moore, where he found a happy life in exchange for his labor.

"And if Ayrton praises me," said the Irish settler, when this story was finished, "I have only reason to praise him. He is an intelligent, brave man, a good worker, and, if he pleases, Paddy O'Moore's house will be his for a long time."

Ayrton thanked the Irishman with a gesture and waited for further questions. He reasoned, however, that the legitimate curiosity of his listeners should be satisfied. What could he possibly answer now that hadn't already been said a hundred times? Glenarvan was about to open the discussion on a new plan to be devised, taking advantage of the encounter with Ayrton and his information, when the major, addressing the sailor, said:

"Were you a quartermaster on board the *Britannia* ?"

"Yes," Ayrton replied without hesitation.

But, understanding that a certain feeling of distrust, a doubt, however slight, had dictated this request to the major, he added:

"In fact, I saved my commitment on board from sinking."

And he immediately left the common room to retrieve the official document. His absence didn't last a minute. But Paddy O'Moore had time to say:

" *My lord* , I consider Ayrton an honest man. In the two months he has been in my service, I have not had a single complaint against him. I knew the story of his shipwreck and captivity. He is a loyal man, worthy of your complete trust."

Glenarvan was about to reply that he had never doubted Ayrton's good faith when Ayrton returned and presented his formal commitment. It was a document signed by the owners of the *Britannia* and Captain Grant, whose handwriting Mary recognized perfectly.

He noted that "Tom Ayrton, a first-class seaman, was engaged as a quartermaster on board the three-masted *Britannia* , from Glasgow." There was therefore no longer any possible doubt about Ayrton's identity, as it would have been difficult to admit that this engagement was in his hands and did not belong to him.

"Now," said Glenarvan, "I am seeking everyone's advice and calling for an immediate discussion on what should be done. Your opinions, Ayrton, will be especially valuable to us, and I would be most grateful if you would share them."

Ayrton thought for a few moments, then replied as follows:

“Thank you, *my lord* , for the trust you have placed in me, and I hope to prove myself worthy of it. I have some knowledge of this country, of the customs of the natives, and if I can be of any service to you…”

"Certainly," replied Glenarvan.

"I think like you," replied Ayrton, "that Captain Grant and his two sailors were saved from the shipwreck; but, since they did not reach the English possessions, since they did not reappear, I do not doubt that their fate was mine, and that they are prisoners of a tribe of natives."

“You’re repeating the arguments I’ve already made, Ayrton,” said Paganel. “The shipwrecked sailors are obviously prisoners of the natives, just as they feared. But are we to assume that, like you, they were swept north of the thirty-seventh degree?”

"That's a supposition, sir," replied Ayrton; "enemy tribes hardly ever remain in the vicinity of districts under English control."

"That will complicate our search," said Glenarvan, quite bewildered. "How can we find traces of the prisoners in the interior of such a vast continent?"

A prolonged silence greeted this observation.

Lady Helena often looked questioningly at all her companions without receiving a reply. Paganel himself remained silent, contrary to his usual habit. His customary ingenuity failed him. John Mangles paced the common room, as if he were on the deck of his ship, and in some predicament.

"And you, Mr. Ayrton," Lady Helena then said to the sailor, "what would you do?"

“Madam,” Ayrton replied rather briskly, “I would re-embark on the *Duncan* and go straight to the site of the shipwreck. There, I would take stock of the circumstances, and perhaps any clues that chance might provide.”

"Good," said Glenarvan; "only, we will have to wait until the *Duncan* is repaired."

"Ah! You experienced some damage?" asked Ayrton.

—Yes, replied John Mangles.

—Serious?

—No, but they require tools that we don't have on board. One of the propeller blades is bent and can only be repaired in Melbourne.

"Can't you go sailing?" asked the quartermaster.

—Yes, but if the winds were to oppose the *Duncan* , it would take a considerable amount of time to reach Twofold Bay, and in any case, it would have to return to Melbourne.

"Well, let him go to Melbourne!" cried Paganel, "and let us go to Twofold Bay without him."

—And how? asked John Mangles.

—By crossing Australia as we crossed America, by following the thirty-seventh parallel.

"But *Duncan?"* Ayrton continued, insisting in a very particular way.

—The *Duncan* will join us, or we will join the *Duncan* , as the case may be. If Captain Grant is found during our crossing, we will return to Melbourne together. If, on the other hand, we continue our search to the coast, the *Duncan* will join us there. Who has any objections to this plan? Is it the major?

—No, replied Mac Nabbs, if crossing Australia is feasible.

"So practical," replied Paganel, "that I propose that Lady Helena and Miss Grant accompany us."

"Are you serious, Paganel?" asked Glenarvan.

“Quite seriously, my dear lord. It’s a journey of three hundred and fifty miles, no more! At twelve miles a day, it will barely last a month, that is to say, the time needed for the repairs to the *Duncan* . Ah! If it were a

question of crossing the Australian continent at a lower latitude, if it were necessary to cut across its greatest width, to cross those immense deserts where the heat is scorching, to do, in short, what the most daring travelers have not yet attempted, that would be different! But this thirty-seventh parallel cuts through the province of Victoria, an English country if ever there was one, with roads, railways, and a large population along that stretch. It’s a journey that can be made by carriage, if you like, or by cart, which is even better. It’s a stroll from London to Edinburgh. It’s nothing more than that.”

"But what about ferocious animals?" said Glenarvan, who wanted to outline all possible objections.

—There are no ferocious animals in Australia.

—But the savages?

—There are no savages at this latitude, and in any case, they do not have the cruelty of the New Zealanders.

—But the convicts?

"There are no convicts in the southern provinces of Australia, only in the eastern colonies. The province of Victoria not only turned them away, but it passed a law to exclude from its territory convicts released from other provinces. The Victorian government even threatened this year to withdraw the Peninsular Company's subsidy if its ships continued to take on coal in the ports of Western Australia where convicts are allowed. What! You don't know that, you Englishman!"

"First of all, I am not English," replied Glenarvan.

“What Mr. Paganel said is perfectly true,” said Paddy O’Moore. “Not only the state of Victoria, but South Australia, Queensland, even Tasmania, have agreed to expel the deportees from their territory. Since I’ve lived on this farm, I haven’t heard of a single convict.”

"And for my part, I've never met one," replied Ayrton.

"You see, my friends," continued Jacques Paganel, "very few savages, no ferocious beasts, no convicts; there are not many countries in Europe of which one could say the same! Well, is that agreed?"

"What do you think, Helena?" asked Glenarvan.

"What we're all thinking, my dear Edward," replied Lady Helena, turning to her companions: "Let's go! Let's go!"

## Chapter VIII *The Departure*

Glenarvan was not in the habit of wasting time between adopting an idea and carrying it out. Once Paganel's proposal was accepted, he immediately gave his orders so that the preparations for the voyage would be completed as quickly as possible. Departure was set for two days later, December 22nd.

What results would this crossing of Australia produce? With Harry Grant's presence now an indisputable fact, the consequences of this expedition could be significant. It increased the odds of success. No one expected to find the captain precisely on the thirty-seventh parallel, which was to be rigorously followed; but perhaps it would cut across

his tracks, and in any case, it led straight to the scene of his shipwreck. That was the main point.

Furthermore, if Ayrton agreed to join the travelers, to guide them through the forests of Victoria province, and to lead them to the east coast, there was a new chance of success. Glenarvan sensed this well; he was particularly keen to secure the useful assistance of Harry Grant's companion, and he asked his host if he would mind if he suggested to Ayrton that he accompany him.

Paddy O'Moore agreed, though not without regretting the loss of this excellent servant.

"Well, Ayrton, will you join us on this expedition to search for the survivors of the *Britannia* ?"

Ayrton did not immediately respond to this request; he even seemed to hesitate for a few moments; then, after careful consideration, he said:

"Yes, *my lord* , I will follow you, and if I do not lead you in the footsteps of Captain Grant, at least I will lead you to the very place where his ship was wrecked.

"Thank you, Ayrton," replied Glenarvan.

—Just one question, *my lord* .

—Do it, my friend.

—Where will you find *Duncan?*

—In Melbourne, if we do not cross Australia from one coast to the other. On the east coast, if our search extends that far.

—But what about his captain?...

—His captain will await my instructions in the port of Melbourne.

"Very well, *my lord* ," said Ayrton, "you can count on me."

"I'm counting on it, Ayrton," replied Glenarvan.

The *Britannia 's foreman* was warmly thanked by the passengers of the *Duncan* . His captain's children showered him with affection. Everyone was happy with his decision, except the Irishman, who was losing an intelligent and loyal assistant. But Paddy understood the importance Glenarvan must attach to the quartermaster's presence, and he resigned himself to it.

Glenarvan charged him with providing means of transport for this journey across Australia, and, this matter concluded, the passengers returned on board, after making an appointment with Ayrton.

The return was joyful. Everything had changed.

All hesitation vanished. The courageous researchers no longer had to venture blindly along the thirty-seventh parallel. Harry Grant, without a doubt, had found refuge on the continent, and everyone felt filled with the satisfaction that certainty brings after doubt.

In two months, if circumstances were favorable, the *Duncan* would land Harry Grant on the shores of Scotland!

When John Mangles supported the proposal to attempt the crossing of Australia with the passengers, he fully assumed that, this time, he

would accompany the expedition. He therefore conferred with Glenarvan on this matter.

He put forward all sorts of arguments in his favor, his devotion to Lady Helena, for his own honor, his usefulness as organizer of the caravan, and his uselessness as captain aboard the *Duncan* , in short, a thousand excellent reasons, except the best one, which Glenarvan did not need to be convinced.

"Just one question, John," said Glenarvan. "Do you have absolute confidence in your second?"

“Absolutely,” replied John Mangles. “Tom Austin is a good sailor. He will steer the *Duncan* to its destination, repair it skillfully, and bring it back on time. Tom is a man bound by duty and discipline. He would never presume to alter or delay the execution of an order. Your honor can therefore rely on him as much as on myself.”

"It's settled, John," replied Glenarvan, "you will accompany us; for it will be good," he added, smiling, "that you are there when we find Mary Grant's father."

"Oh! Your Honor!..." murmured John Mangles.

That was all he could say. He paled for a moment and took the hand that Lord Glenarvan offered him.

The next day, John Mangles, accompanied by the carpenter and sailors carrying provisions, returned to Paddy O'Moore's establishment. He was to arrange transport in conjunction with the Irishman.

The whole family was waiting for him, ready to work under his orders. Ayrton was there and generously shared the advice he drew from his experience.

Paddy and he agreed on this point: that the female travelers should travel by oxcart, and the male travelers on horseback. Paddy was able to provide the animals and the vehicle.

The vehicle was one of those twenty-foot-long carts covered with a tarpaulin and supported by four solid wheels, without spokes, without rims, without iron bands, simply wooden discs, in short. The front axle, quite far from the rear axle, was attached by a rudimentary mechanism that did not allow for tight turns.

Attached to this train was a thirty-five-foot pole, along which six yoked oxen were to be placed. These animals, thus arranged, pulled with their heads and necks by means of a double combination: a yoke fastened across their necks and a collar secured to the yoke by an iron wedge. Great skill was required to drive this narrow, long, swaying machine, prone to veering off course, and to guide the team with the goad. But Ayrton had learned his trade on the Irish farm, and Paddy vouched for his competence. Therefore, the role of driver fell to him.

The vehicle, lacking springs, offered no comfort; but such was it, such was the way it had to be. John Mangles, unable to alter its crude construction, had the interior arranged in the most suitable manner. First, it was divided into two compartments by means of a wooden partition. The rear was intended to hold provisions, luggage, and Mr. Olbinett's portable kitchen. The front was to belong entirely to the women travelers. Under the carpenter's care, this first compartment

was transformed into a comfortable room, covered with a thick carpet, equipped with a toilet and two berths reserved for Lady Helena and Mary Grant. Thick leather curtains closed off this first compartment when necessary and protected it from the night chill. In a pinch, the men could find shelter there during heavy rains; but a tent usually had to provide them with shelter when setting up camp.

John Mangles ingeniously managed to gather in a small space all the objects necessary for two women, and he succeeded.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant should not have missed the comfortable cabins of the *Duncan too much in this rolling room* .

As for the travelers, it was simpler: seven sturdy horses were allocated to Lord Glenarvan, Paganel, Robert Grant, Mac Nabbs, John Mangles, and the two sailors Wilson and Mulrady who were accompanying their master on this new expedition. Ayrton had his natural place on the wagon seat, and Mr. Olbinett, who had little interest in riding, would be perfectly happy to travel in the baggage compartment.

Horses and oxen grazed in the meadows of the dwelling, and could be easily gathered at the time of departure.

Having made arrangements and given orders to the master carpenter, John Mangles returned on board with the Irish family, who wished to visit Lord Glenarvan. Ayrton had deemed it appropriate to join them, and, around four o'clock, John and his companions crossed the gangplank of the *Duncan* .

They were received with open arms. Glenarvan offered them dinner on board. He didn't want to be outdone in courtesy, and his guests readily accepted the return of their Australian hospitality in the yacht's lounge.

Paddy O'Moore was amazed. The cabin furnishings, the draperies, the tapestries, all the maple and rosewood fittings excited his admiration. Ayrton, on the other hand, gave only lukewarm approval to these costly superfluities.

But, on the other hand, the quartermaster of the *Britannia* examined the yacht from a more marine point of view; he visited it down to the bottom of the hold; he went down to the propeller room; he observed the engine, inquired about its effective power, its consumption; he explored the coal bunkers, the galley, the powder supply; he was particularly interested in the arms store, the cannon mounted on the forecastle, within its range.

Glenarvan was dealing with a man who knew his stuff; he could see that clearly from Ayrton's special requests. Finally, Ayrton concluded his tour with an inspection of the masts and rigging.

"You have a fine ship there, *my lord* ," he said.

"A good ship above all," replied Glenarvan.

—And what is its tonnage?

—It measures two hundred and ten tons.

—Am I very wrong, added Ayrton, in stating that the *Duncan* easily makes its fifteen knots at full steam?

"Put seventeen in," replied John Mangles, "and you'll count correctly."

"Seventeen!" cried the quartermaster, "but then not a single warship, I mean even the best ones, is capable of chasing it?"

"Not one!" replied John Mangles. "The *Duncan* is a true racing yacht, which would not be beaten under any conditions."

"Even under sail?" asked Ayrton.

—Even when sailing.

"Well, *my lord* , and you, Captain," replied Ayrton, "accept the compliments of a sailor who knows what a ship is worth."

"Very well, Ayrton," replied Glenarvan; "then stay on board, and it will be entirely up to you whether this vessel becomes yours."

"I'll think about it, *my lord* ," the quartermaster replied simply.

Mr. Olbinett came at that moment to inform His Honor that dinner was served. Glenarvan and his guests made their way to the quarterdeck.

“A clever man, this Ayrton,” Paganel said to the major.

"Too clever!" murmured Mac Nabbs, who, without apparent reason, it must be said, did not like the quartermaster's face and manner.

During dinner, Ayrton gave interesting details about the Australian continent, which he knew perfectly. He inquired about the number of sailors Lord Glenarvan was taking on his expedition.

When he learned that only two of them, Mulrady and Wilson, were to accompany him, he seemed surprised. He persuaded Glenarvan to form his crew from the best sailors of the *Duncan* . He even insisted on this point, an insistence which, incidentally, must have dispelled any suspicion in the major's mind.

"But," said Glenarvan, "our journey across South Australia presents no danger?"

"None," Ayrton quickly replied.

"Well, let's leave as many people on board as possible. We need men to sail the *Duncan* and to repair it. Above all, it's important that it arrives exactly at its assigned rendezvous point. So, let's not reduce its crew."

Ayrton seemed to understand Lord Glenarvan's observation and did not insist further.

As evening fell, the Scots and Irish parted ways.

Ayrton and Paddy O'Moore's family returned to their home. Horses and wagon had to be ready for the next day. Departure was set for eight o'clock in the morning.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant then made their final preparations. They were brief, and certainly less meticulous than those of Jacques Paganel. The scholar spent part of the night unscrewing, wiping, screwing, and rescrewing the lenses of his telescope. He was still asleep when, at dawn the next day, the major woke him with a booming voice.

The luggage had already been transported to the farm by John Mangles. A boat awaited the travelers, who quickly boarded. The young captain gave his final orders to Tom Austin. He instructed him above all to await Lord Glenarvan's orders in Melbourne and to carry them out scrupulously, whatever they might be. The old sailor replied to John Mangles that he could count on him. On behalf of the crew, he offered his best wishes for the expedition's success. The boat overflowed, and a thunderous roar of cheers erupted in the air.

In ten minutes, the boat reached the shore. A quarter of an hour later, the travelers arrived at the Irish farm. Everything was ready. Lady Helena was delighted with her accommodations. The immense wagon with its primitive wheels and massive planks particularly pleased her. The six oxen harnessed in pairs had a patriarchal air that suited her very well.

"Good heavens!" said Paganel, "this is an admirable vehicle, worth all the *mail coaches* in the world. A house that moves, that walks, that stops wherever you please, what more could one wish for?"

"Mr. Paganel," replied Lady Helena, "I hope to have the pleasure of receiving you in my salons?"

"What, madam," replied the scholar, "but it will be an honor for me! Have you taken a day?"

"I'll be there every day for my friends," Lady
Helena replied with a laugh, "and you are…"

"The most devoted of all, madam," replied Paganel gallantly.

This exchange of pleasantries was interrupted by the arrival of seven fully harnessed horses led by one of Paddy's sons. Lord Glenarvan settled the price of these various acquisitions with the Irishman, adding copious thanks which the good settler considered at least equal to the guineas.

The signal to depart was given. Lady Helena and Miss Grant took their places in their compartment, Ayrton in the passenger seat, Olbinett at the rear of the wagon; Glenarvan, the major, Paganel, Robert, John Mangles, the two sailors, all armed with rifles and revolvers, mounted their horses. A "God help you!" was called out by Paddy O'Moore, and echoed by his family. Ayrton gave a distinctive shout and spurred his long team. The wagon lurched forward, its planks creaked, the axles squeaked in the wheel hubs, and soon the hospitable farm of the honest Irishman disappeared around the bend in the road.

## Chapter IX *The Province of Victoria*

It was December 23, 1864. This December, so sad, so gloomy, so wet in the northern hemisphere, should have been called June on this continent.

Astronomically, summer had already begun, for on the 21st, the sun had just reached Capricorn, and its presence above the horizon was already diminishing by a few minutes. Thus, it was during the hottest season of the year and under the rays of an almost tropical sun that Lord Glenarvan's new journey was to take place.

The entirety of English possessions in this part of the Pacific Ocean is called Australasia. It includes New

Holland, Tasmania, New Zealand, and some
surrounding islands.

As for the Australian continent, it is divided into vast colonies of very unequal size and wealth. Anyone who glances at the modern maps drawn by Messrs. Petermann or Preschoell is immediately struck by the straightness of these divisions.

The English drew up the conventional lines that separate these large provinces with a ruler.

They took no account of the orographic slopes, the course of the rivers, the variations in climate, or the differences in race. These settlements are rectangular in shape, fitting together like the pieces of a marquetry. This arrangement of straight lines and right angles reveals the work of a surveyor, not a geographer. Only the coasts, with their varied curves, fjords, bays, headlands, and estuaries, protest in the name of nature with their charming irregularity.

This chessboard-like aspect always, and rightly so, excited Jacques Paganel's enthusiasm. If Australia had been French, French geographers would certainly not have taken their passion for the set square and ruling pen to such an extreme.

The colonies of the great island of Oceania currently number six: New South Wales, capital Sydney; Queensland, capital Brisbane; the province of Victoria, capital Melbourne; South Australia, capital Adelaide; Western Australia, capital Perth; and finally, North Australia, still without a capital. Only the coasts are populated by settlers. Hardly any significant town has ventured two hundred miles inland.

As for the interior of the continent, that is to say over an area equal to two-thirds of Europe, it is almost unknown.

Fortunately, the thirty-seventh parallel does not cross these immense solitudes, these inaccessible lands, which have already claimed many victims for science. Glenarvan could not have faced them.

He was only dealing with the southern part of Australia, which was divided into the following parts: a narrow portion of the province of Adelaide, the province of Victoria in its entirety, and finally the apex of the inverted triangle formed by New South Wales.

From Cape Bernoulli to the Victoria border, it's barely sixty-two miles. It was two days' walk, no more, and Ayrton planned to sleep the following night in Aspley, the westernmost town in the province of Victoria.

The beginning of a journey is always marked by the enthusiasm of both riders and horses. The riders' energy was undeniable, but it seemed wise to moderate the horses' pace. Those who wish to travel far must take care of their mounts. It was therefore decided that each day's journey would cover no more than twenty-five to thirty miles on average.

Moreover, the horses' pace had to match the slower gait of the oxen, veritable mechanical machines that lost in time what they gained in strength. The wagon, with its passengers and supplies, was the core of the caravan, the mobile fortress. The riders could beat the platform on its flanks, but they were never to stray far from it.

Thus, with no specific order of march adopted, everyone was free to do as they pleased within certain limits: the hunters to roam the plains, the amiable people to converse with the women in the wagon, the philosophers to philosophize together. Paganel, who possessed all these diverse qualities, had to be everywhere at once.

The journey through the province of Adelaide offered nothing of interest. A series of low hills, rich in dust, a long stretch of wasteland which together constitute what is called "bush" in the country, and a few meadows covered with clumps of a salt-tolerant shrub with angular leaves, which sheep are very fond of, followed one another for several miles. Here and there, a few "pig-faces," pig-headed sheep of a breed peculiar to New Holland, could be seen grazing between the poles of the recently established telegraph line from Adelaide to the coast.

Until then, these plains were strikingly reminiscent of the monotonous expanses of the Argentine Pampas.

The same grassy, even ground. The same horizon sharply defined against the sky. Mac Nabbs maintained that they hadn't changed countries; but Paganel asserted that the land would soon change. On his assurance, they expected wonderful things.

Around three o'clock, the wagon crossed a wide, treeless expanse known as the "mosquito plains." The scholar had the geographical satisfaction of finding that it lived up to its name. The travelers and their mounts suffered greatly from the repeated bites of these troublesome flies; avoiding them was impossible; calming them was easier, thanks to the ammonia bottles in the portable pharmacy.

Paganel could not help but blame all the devils those relentless mosquitoes that riddled his long body with their annoying bites.

Towards evening, a few bright acacia hedges enlivened the plain; here and there, clumps of white gum trees; further on, a freshly dug rut; then, trees of European origin—olive, lemon, and holm oaks—and finally, well-maintained palisades. At eight o'clock, the oxen, quickening their pace under Ayrton's goad, arrived at the Red-Gum station.

The word "station" refers to the inland settlements where cattle, Australia's primary source of wealth, are raised. The ranchers are the "squatters," meaning the people who sit on the ground. Indeed, this is the first position any settler, weary from their travels across these vast lands, adopts.

Red-Gum-Station was an establishment of little importance. But Glenarvan found the most genuine hospitality there. A table is invariably set for the traveler under the roof of these solitary dwellings, and in an Australian settlement one always finds an obliging host.

The next day, Ayrton harnessed his oxen at daybreak. He wanted to reach Victoria territory that very evening. The terrain gradually became more rugged. A succession of small hills undulated as far as the eye could see, all dusted with scarlet sand. It looked like an immense red flag thrown across the plain, its folds billowing in the breeze. A few malleys, a type of fir tree speckled with white, with straight, smooth trunks, spread their branches and dark green foliage over lush meadows teeming with joyful flocks of jerboas. Later, there were vast fields of scrub and young gum trees; then the groups dispersed, the

isolated shrubs became trees, and presented the first example of Australian forests.

However, as they approached the Victorian border, the landscape changed noticeably. The travelers felt they were treading on new ground. Their unwavering course remained a straight line, unbroken by any obstacle, lake or mountain, forcing them to change it into a curve or a break. They invariably applied the first theorem of geometry, following, without deviating, the shortest path from one point to another. They were unaware of the fatigue and difficulties they were experiencing.

Their walk conformed to the slow pace of oxen, and if these tranquil animals did not go fast, at least they went without ever stopping.

Thus, after a journey of sixty miles completed in two days, the caravan reached, on the 23rd

In the evening, the parish of Aspley, first town in the province of Victoria, located on the one hundred and forty-first degree of longitude, in the district of Wimerra.

The wagon was stored, thanks to Ayrton's efforts, at Crown's Inn, an inn which, for lack of a better name, was called the *Crown Hotel* . The supper, consisting solely of mutton prepared in every conceivable way, was steaming on the table.

We ate a lot, but we talked even more.

Eager to learn about the unique features of the Australian continent, everyone questioned the geographer avidly. Paganel readily agreed and described this Victorian province, which was named Happy Australia.

"A false label!" he said. "It would have been better to call it Rich Australia, for countries, like individuals, do not bring happiness. Australia, thanks to its gold mines, has been delivered into the hands of a devastating and ferocious band of adventurers. You will see this when we cross the goldfields."

"Doesn't the Victoria colony have a fairly recent origin?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

—Yes, madam, it is only thirty years old.
It was on June 6, 1835, a Tuesday…

"At a quarter past seven in the evening," added the major, who liked to nitpick with Paganel about the accuracy of his dates.

“No, at 7:10,” the geographer replied seriously, “Batman and Falckner founded a settlement at Port Phillip, on the bay where the great city of Melbourne now stands. For fifteen years, the colony was part of New South Wales and was under the jurisdiction of Sydney, its capital. But in 1851, it was declared independent and took the name Victoria.”

"And since then it has prospered?" asked Glenarvan.

"Judge for yourselves, my noble friend," replied Paganel. "Here are the figures provided by the latest statistics, and, whatever Mac Nabbs may think, I know of nothing more eloquent than numbers."

—Come on, said the major.

—I will. In 1836, the colony of Port Philip had two hundred and forty-four inhabitants. Today, the province of Victoria has five hundred and fifty thousand. Seven million vines yield one hundred and twenty-one

thousand gallons of wine annually. One hundred and three thousand horses gallop across its plains, and six hundred and seventy-five thousand two hundred and seventy-two head of cattle graze on its vast pastures.

"Bravo, Mr. Paganel!" exclaimed Lady Helena, laughing heartily. "You must admit you're well-versed in these geographical matters, and my cousin Mac Nabbs may try his best, but he won't catch you out."

"But it is my job, madam, to know these things and to teach them to you if necessary. So you can believe me when I tell you that this strange country holds wonders in store for us."

—So far, however… replied Mac Nabbs, who took pleasure in pushing the geographer to further excite his verve.

“But wait, you impatient major!” cried Paganel. “You’ve barely set foot on the border, and you’re already getting upset! Well! I tell you, I repeat, I maintain that this country is the most curious on earth. Its formation, its nature, its products, its climate, and even its future disappearance, have astonished, are astonishing, and will astonish all the scientists of the world. Imagine, my friends, a continent whose edges, not its center, originally rose above the waves like a gigantic ring; which perhaps contains in its central part a half-evaporated inland sea; whose rivers are drying up day by day; where moisture does not exist, neither in the air nor in the soil; where trees lose their bark annually instead of their leaves; where the leaves are presented in profile to the sun, not head-on, and cast no shade; where the wood is often incombustible; where hewn stones melt in the rain; where forests are low and grasses gigantic; where animals are strange; where quadrupeds have beaks, like

the echidna and the platypus, and have forced naturalists to create especially for them the new genus of monothromes; where the *kangaroo* leaps on its unequal feet; where sheep have pig heads; where foxes flit from tree to tree; where swans are black; where rats make nests; where the bowerbird opens its salons to visits from its winged friends; where birds astonish the imagination with the diversity of their songs and abilities; where one serves as a clock and another cracks a postilion's whip, one imitates a knife grinder, another beats the seconds like a pendulum, where one laughs in the morning when the sun rises, and another weeps in the evening when it sets! Oh! Bizarre, illogical land, if ever there was one, paradoxical and unnaturally formed! It is with good reason that the learned botanist Grimard could say of you: "So this is Australia, a kind of parody of universal laws, or rather a challenge, thrown in the face of the rest of the world!"

Paganel's tirade, launched at breakneck speed, seemed endless. The eloquent secretary of the geographical society was beside himself. He went on and on, gesticulating wildly and brandishing his fork to the great danger of his tablemates. But finally, his voice was drowned out by a thunder of applause, and he managed to fall silent. Certainly, after this enumeration of Australian peculiarities, no one thought to ask him for anything more. And yet the major, in his calm voice, couldn't help but say:

"And that's all, Paganel?"

—Well! No, that's not all! retorted the scholar with renewed vehemence.

"What?" asked Lady Helena, very intrigued. "Is there anything even more astonishing in Australia?"

—Yes, madam, its climate! It still surpasses its productions in its strangeness.

"For example!" they exclaimed.

—I am not talking about the hygienic qualities of the Australian continent, so rich in oxygen and so poor in nitrogen; it has no humid winds, since the trade winds blow parallel to its coasts, and most diseases are unknown there, from typhus to measles and chronic illnesses.

"However, that's not a small advantage," said Glenarvan.

"No doubt, but I don't talk about it," replied Paganel. "Here, the climate has an... unbelievable quality."

"Which one?" asked John Mangles.

—He's moralizing!

—Moralizer?

“Yes,” replied the scholar with conviction. “Yes, moralizer! Here, metals don’t oxidize in the air, nor do men. Here, the pure, dry atmosphere whitens everything quickly, linen and souls alike! And the virtues of this climate had been well noted in England when it was decided to send people to this country to be morally reformed.”

"What! Is this influence really being felt?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

—Yes, madam, on animals and men.

—You're not joking, Mr. Paganel?

—I'm not joking. The horses and cattle there are remarkably docile. You'll see.

—That's not possible!

—But it is true! And wrongdoers, transported to this invigorating and healthy air, are regenerated there in a few years. This effect is known to philanthropists.

In Australia, all aspects of nature are improving.

"But then, Mr. Paganel, you who are already so good," said Lady Helena, "what will become of you on this privileged land?"

"Excellent, madam," replied Paganel, "simply excellent!"

## Chapter X *Wimerra River*

The following day, December 24th, the departure took place at dawn. The heat was already intense, but bearable, the road almost flat and suitable for the horses' pace.

The small group entered a rather sparse thicket. In the evening, after a good day's walk, they camped on the shores of Lac Blanc, with its brackish and undrinkable waters.

There, Jacques Paganel was forced to admit that this lake was no whiter than the Black Sea is black, the Red Sea is red, the Yellow River is yellow, and the Blue Mountains are blue. However, he argued

vehemently, out of a geographer's pride; but his arguments did not prevail.

Mr. Olbinett prepared the evening meal with his usual punctuality; then the travelers, some in the wagon, others under the tent, soon fell asleep, despite the pitiful howls of the "dingos," which are the jackals of Australia.

An admirable plain, dappled with chrysanthemums, stretched beyond White Lake. The next morning, Glenarvan and his companions, upon waking, would gladly have applauded the magnificent scenery before them. They set off. Only a few distant humps betrayed the contours of the land. As far as the eye could see, all was meadow and flowers in their springtime bloom. The blue hues of the small-leaved flax blended with the scarlet red of an acanthus peculiar to this region. Numerous varieties of emerophilus brightened this greenery, and the salt-laden soils disappeared beneath goosefoot, orache, and chard—some glaucous, others reddish—from the invasive Salsolaceae family. These plants are useful to industry, for they yield excellent soda ash through the burning and washing of their ashes.

Paganel, who became a botanist amidst the flowers, called these varied productions by their names, and, with his mania for quantifying everything, he did not fail to say that up to now four thousand two hundred species of plants distributed among one hundred and twenty families were counted in the Australian flora.

Later, after covering a few miles quickly, the wagon traveled between tall clumps of acacia, mimosa, and white gum trees, whose inflorescence is so variable. The plant kingdom in this region of the

"spring plains" was not ungrateful to the sun, and it returned in fragrances and colors what the sun gave it in rays.

As for the animal kingdom, it was more sparing in its bounty. A few cassowaries hopped about on the plain, but it was impossible to get close. However, the major was skillful enough to strike a very rare animal, one that is tending towards extinction, with a bullet in its flank. It was a jabiru, the giant crane of the English colonists. This bird was five feet tall, and its broad, conical, black beak, with a very sharp tip, measured eighteen inches in length. The violet and purple sheen of its head contrasted sharply with the glossy green of its neck, the brilliant whiteness of its throat, and the bright red of its long legs.

Nature seemed to have exhausted the entire palette of primitive colors in its favor.

This bird was much admired, and the major would have been the honor of the day, had young Robert not encountered, a few miles further on, and bravely knocked down, a shapeless beast, half hedgehog, half anteater, a creature only half-formed like the animals of the earliest ages of creation. A long, sticky, extensible tongue hung from its grafted mouth, and fished for ants, which constitute its principal food.

"It's an echidna!" said Paganel, giving this monothrome its true name. "Have you ever seen such an animal?"

"He's horrible," replied Glenarvan.

"Horrible, but curious," replied Paganel; "moreover, peculiar to Australia, and one would search for it in vain in any other part of the

world."

Naturally, Paganel wanted to take the hideous echidna with him and put it in the luggage compartment. But Mr. Olbinett protested with such indignation that the scientist gave up on keeping this specimen of monotherms.

That day, the travelers crossed the 141st parallel by thirty minutes. Until then, few settlers, few squatters had appeared before their eyes. The land seemed deserted. There was not a trace of Aboriginal people, for the savage tribes roamed further north across the vast wilderness watered by the tributaries of the Darling and the Murray.

But a curious sight interested Glenarvan's troupe. They were given to see one of those immense herds that bold speculators bring from the mountains of the east to the provinces of Victoria and South Australia.

Around four o'clock in the evening, John Mangles reported, three miles ahead, an enormous column of dust unfurling on the horizon. Where did this phenomenon come from? They were very perplexed as to how to say.

Paganel was leaning towards some kind of meteor, for which his vivid imagination was already searching for a natural cause. But Ayrton stopped him in the realm of conjecture he was venturing into, asserting that this dust devil came from a herd on the move.

The quartermaster was not mistaken. The thick cloud approached. From it came a whole concert of bleating, neighing and bellowing.

The human voice, in the form of cries, whistles, and shouts, also mingled with this pastoral symphony.

A man emerged from the noisy cloud. He was the chief driver of this four-legged army.

Glenarvan stepped forward to meet him, and relations were established without further ado. The driver, or, to give him his proper title, the "stockeeper," owned part of the herd. His name was Sam Machell, and he had indeed come from the eastern provinces, heading towards Portland Bay.

His herd comprised twelve thousand seventy-five head: one thousand oxen, eleven thousand sheep, and seventy-five horses. All these animals, bought thin on the plains of the Blue Mountains, were destined to fatten up amidst the healthy pastures of South Australia, where they would be resold at a considerable profit. Thus, Sam Machell, earning two pounds per ox and half a pound per sheep, stood to make a profit of fifty thousand francs. It was a big business. But what patience, what energy it took to drive this unruly herd to its destination, and what hardships to endure!

The hard-won gain that this tough job brings is hard-earned!

Sam Machell told his story in a few words, while the herd continued its march between the clumps of mimosa. Lady Helena, Mary Grant, and the riders had dismounted, and, seated in the shade of a large gum tree, they listened to the *stockeeper 's tale* .

Sam Machell had been gone for seven months. He covered about ten miles a day, and his endless journey was expected to last another three months. He had with him, to help him in this arduous task, twenty dogs and thirty men, including five black men very skilled at finding the tracks of lost animals.

Six wagons followed the army. The drivers, armed with *stockwhipps* , whips with an eighteen-inch handle and a nine-foot-long thong, circulated between the ranks, restoring here and there the often disturbed order, while the light dog cavalry flitted on the wings.

The travelers admired the discipline established in the herd. The different breeds walked separately, for oxen and wild sheep do not get along well; the former never consent to graze where the latter have passed. Hence, it was necessary to place the oxen at the head, and these, divided into two battalions, went ahead.

Five regiments of sheep, commanded by twenty drivers, followed, and the platoon of horses marched in the rearguard.

Sam Machell pointed out to his listeners that the army guides were neither dogs nor men, but rather oxen—intelligent "leaders" whose superiority was recognized by their peers. They advanced to the front rank with perfect gravity, instinctively choosing the right path, and firmly convinced of their right to be treated with respect. Consequently, they were treated with care, for the herd obeyed them without question. Should the herd wish to halt, this request had to be granted, and any attempt to resume the march after a stop was futile unless the herd themselves gave the signal to depart.

A few details added by the *stockeeper* completed the story of this expedition, worthy of being written, if not commissioned, by Xenophon himself. As long as the army marched on the plains, all was well. Little hindrance, little fatigue. The animals grazed along the road, quenched their thirst at the numerous creeks in the pastures, slept at night, traveled by day, and gathered obediently at the sound of the hounds.

But in the great forests of the continent, through the thickets of eucalyptus and mimosa, the difficulties increased. Platoons, battalions, and regiments mingled or strayed, and it took considerable time to reunite them. If, by misfortune, a leader happened to go astray, he had to be found at all costs under penalty of a general rout, and the Black soldiers often spent several days on these difficult searches. When heavy rains came to fall, the lazy beasts refused to move forward, and during violent storms a disorderly panic seized these animals mad with terror.

However, through sheer energy and activity, the *stockeeper* triumphed over these ever-recurring difficulties. He marched on; miles piled up; plains, woods, and mountains remained behind. But where, in addition to so many other qualities, one needed that superior quality called patience—an unshakeable patience, a patience that not only hours, not only days, but weeks could not break—was when crossing rivers. There, the *stockeeper* found himself held up before a watercourse, its banks not impassable, but uncrossable. The obstacle came solely from the stubbornness of the flock, which refused to cross. The oxen, after sniffing the water, retraced their steps. The sheep fled in all directions rather than face the water. They waited until nightfall to lead the flock to the river, but it was to no avail. The rams were forcibly thrown in, but the ewes refused to follow. They tried to deprive the flock of water for several days, but the flock went without drinking and didn't venture any further. The lambs were carried to the other bank, in the hope that the mothers would come to their cries; the lambs bleated, but the mothers didn't move from the opposite bank. This sometimes went on for a whole month, and the *stockeeper* was at his wit's end with his bleating, neighing, and bellowing army. Then, one fine day, for no

reason, on a whim, no one knew why or how, a detachment would cross the river, and then it became another difficulty to prevent the flock from rushing in in disarray. Confusion would reign, and many animals would drown in the rapids.

These were the details given by Sam Machell.

During his story, a large part of the herd had marched past in good order. It was time for him to rejoin the head of his army and choose the best pastures. He therefore took leave of Lord Glenarvan, mounted an excellent native horse held on a lead by one of his men, and received everyone's farewells with cordial handshakes.

A few moments later, he had disappeared in the swirl of dust.

The wagon resumed its journey in the opposite direction, having been interrupted for a moment, and only stopped in the evening at the foot of Mount Talbot.

Paganel then astutely pointed out that it was December 25th, Christmas Day, the much-celebrated holiday of English families. But the *steward* hadn't forgotten, and a sumptuous supper, served in the tent, earned him the sincere compliments of the guests. It must be said, Mr. Olbinett had truly outdone himself. His storeroom had provided a selection of European dishes rarely found in the Australian outback. Reindeer ham, slices of salt beef, smoked salmon, a barley and oatcake, unlimited tea, plenty of *whisky* , and a few bottles of port made up this astonishing meal. One would have thought oneself in the grand dining room of Malcolm Castle, in the heart of the Scottish Highlands.

Indeed, nothing was missing from this feast, from the ginger soup to the *minced pies* for dessert.

However, Paganel felt compelled to include the fruit of a wild orange tree that grew at the foot of the hills. It was the natives' "moccaly"; its oranges produced a rather tasteless fruit, but its crushed seeds burned the mouth like cayenne pepper. The geographer persisted in eating them so conscientiously, out of love for science, that he set his palate on fire and was unable to answer the major's barrage of questions about the peculiarities of the Australian deserts.

The following day, December 26th, offered no noteworthy incidents. The sources of Norton Creek were encountered, and later the Mackenzie River, half-dried up. The weather remained fine with very bearable warmth; the wind blew from the south, cooling the air as a north wind would have done in the northern hemisphere: a fact Paganel remarked to his friend Robert Grant.

"A fortunate circumstance," he added, "because the heat is on average stronger in the southern hemisphere than in the northern hemisphere."

"And why?" asked the young boy.

"Why, Robert?" replied Paganel. "Have you never heard that the earth is closer to the sun during the winter?"

—Yes, Mr. Paganel.

—And that the cold of winter is due only to the oblique angle of the sun's rays?

-Perfectly.

—Well, my boy, that's precisely why it's warmer in the southern hemisphere.

"I don't understand," replied Robert, opening his eyes wide.

"Think about it," Paganel continued, "when it is winter over there in Europe, what season is it here in Australia, at the antipodes?"

—Summer, said Robert.

—Well, since at that time the earth is closer to the sun… Do you understand?

-I understand…

—That the summer in the southern regions is hotter as a result of this proximity than the summer in the northern regions.

—Indeed, Mr. Paganel.

—So, when we say that the sun is closer to the earth "in winter", it is only true for us, who live in the northern part of the globe.

"That's something I hadn't thought of," replied
Robert.

"And now go, my boy, and don't forget it again."

Robert graciously received his little lesson in cosmography, and eventually learned that the average temperature in the province of Victoria reached seventy-four degrees Fahrenheit (plus 23°33 centigrades).

In the evening, the troop camped five miles beyond Lonsdale Lake, between Mount Drummond, which rose to the north, and Mount Dryden, whose mediocre summit marred the southern horizon.

The next day, at eleven o'clock, the chariot reached the banks of the Wimerra, on the one hundred and forty-third meridian.

The river, half a mile wide, flowed in clear sheets between two tall rows of gum trees and acacias. A few magnificent myrtles, the *Metrosideros speciosa* among them, raised their long, weeping branches, adorned with red flowers, to a height of about fifteen feet. A thousand birds—orioles, finches, golden-winged pigeons, not to mention chattering parrots—flitted among the green twigs. Below, on the surface of the water, a pair of shy and elusive black swans frolicked. This rare sight of Australian rivers soon disappeared into the meanders of the Wimerra, which capriciously watered this attractive countryside.

However, the wagon had come to a stop on a patch of grass whose edges hung over the fast-flowing water. There was neither raft nor bridge there. Yet they had to cross. Ayrton set about finding a passable ford. The river, a quarter of a mile upstream, seemed shallower, and it was there that he decided to reach the other bank. Several soundings revealed only three feet of water. The wagon could therefore proceed onto this shoal without running great risks.

"Is there no other way to cross this river?"
Glenarvan asked the quartermaster.

"No, *my lord* ," replied Ayrton, "but this passage does not seem dangerous to me. We shall get through it."

—Should Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant leave the carriage?

—Not at all. My oxen are sure-footed, and I take it upon myself to keep them on the right track.

"Come on, Ayrton," replied Glenarvan, "I trust you."

The horsemen surrounded the heavy vehicle, and they resolutely entered the river. Wagons, ordinarily, when attempting such fords, are surrounded by a string of empty barrels that keep them afloat. But here this flotation device was lacking; they had to rely on the skill of the oxen led by the prudent Ayrton. From his seat, he directed the team; the major and the two sailors cut through the swift current a few fathoms ahead.

Glenarvan and John Mangles, on either side of the wagon, stood ready to rescue the travelers, Paganel and Robert brought up the rear.

Everything went well until they reached the middle of the Wimerra. But then the dip deepened, and the water rose above the rims. The oxen, thrown from the ford, could have lost their footing and pulled the swaying machine down with them. Ayrton bravely took action; he waded into the water, and, clinging to the oxen's horns, managed to guide them back onto the right path.

At that moment, an unforeseen jolt occurred; a creaking sound was heard; the carriage tilted at an alarming angle; water reached the feet of the female passengers; the entire apparatus began to drift, despite Glenarvan and John Mangles clinging to the side rails. It was a moment filled with anxiety.

Fortunately, a vigorous push brought the vehicle closer to the opposite bank. The river offered the oxen and horses a gentle uphill slope, and soon men and beasts found themselves safe on the other side, no less relieved than soaked.

Only the front end of the wagon had been broken by the impact, and Glenarvan's horse was unshod in its front feet.

This accident required prompt repair. We were therefore looking at each other with a rather embarrassed expression, when Ayrton proposed to go to the Black Point station, located twenty miles to the north, and bring back a farrier.

"Come on, come on, my good Ayrton," Glenarvan told him. "How long will it take you to make this journey and return to the camp?"

"Fifteen hours perhaps," replied Ayrton, "but no more."

"Go then, and while we wait for your return, we'll camp by the Wimerra."

A few minutes later, the quartermaster, mounted on
Wilson's horse, disappeared behind a thick curtain of mimosas.

## Chapter XI *Burke and Stuart*

The rest of the day was spent in conversation and walks. The travelers, chatting and admiring, strolled along the banks of the Wimerra. Common cranes and ibises, uttering raucous cries, fled at their approach. The satinbird darted about on the high branches of the wild fig tree, golden orioles, wheatears, and epimacus flitted among the magnificent stems of the lilies, kingfishers abandoned their usual

fishing, while the whole more civilized family of parrots—the blue mountain parrot adorned with the seven colors of the prism, the small rose-ringed parrot with its scarlet head and yellow throat, and the lory with its red and blue plumage—continued their deafening chatter atop the flowering gum trees.

Thus, sometimes lying on the grass by the murmuring waters, sometimes wandering aimlessly among the clumps of mimosa, the walkers admired this beautiful scenery until sunset. Night, preceded by a rapid twilight, caught them half a mile from the campsite. They returned, guided not by the North Star, invisible from the southern hemisphere, but by the Southern Cross, which shone halfway between the horizon and the zenith.

Mr. Olbinett had laid out supper under the tent. We sat down to eat. The highlight of the meal was a certain salmis of parrots skillfully killed by Wilson and expertly prepared by the *steward* .

Supper over, everyone tried to find an excuse not to give the first hours of this beautiful night a rest. Lady Helena satisfied everyone by asking Paganel to tell the story of the great Australian explorers, a story promised long ago.

Paganel could not have asked for anything better. His listeners stretched out at the foot of a magnificent *banksia* ; the smoke from the cigars soon rose to the foliage lost in the shade, and the geographer, relying on his inexhaustible memory, immediately began to speak.

“You remember, my friends, and the Major has no doubt not forgotten, the list of travelers I gave you aboard the *Duncan* . Of all those who sought to penetrate the interior of the continent, only four succeeded in

crossing it from south to north or north to south. These were: Burke, in 1860 and 1861; Mac Kinlay, in 1861 and 1862; Landsborough, in 1862; and Stuart, also in 1862. Of Mac Kinlay and Landsborough, I will tell you little. The former went from Adelaide to the Gulf of Carpentaria; the latter, from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Melbourne, both sent by Australian committees in search of Burke, who had not reappeared and was never to reappear."

"Burke and Stuart, these are the two bold explorers I am going to tell you about, and I begin without preamble.

"On August 20, 1860, under the auspices of the Royal Melbourne Society, a former Irish officer, ex-police inspector at Castlemaine, named Robert O'Hara Burke, set out. He was accompanied by eleven men: William John Wills, a distinguished young astronomer; Dr. Beckler, a botanist; Gray; King, a young soldier in the Indian Army; Landells; Brahe; and several sepoys. Twenty-five horses and twenty-five camels carried the travelers, their baggage, and provisions for eighteen months. The expedition was to travel to the Gulf of Carpentaria, on the northern coast, initially following the Cooper River."

"She crossed the Murray and Darling lines without difficulty, and arrived at the Menindié station, on the border of the colonies.

"There, it was recognized that the numerous bags were very cumbersome. This inconvenience and a certain harshness of character in Burke sowed discord among the group. Landells, the camel director, followed by some Hindu servants, separated from the expedition and returned to the banks of the Darling."

"Burke continued onward. Sometimes through magnificent, well-watered pastures, sometimes along stony, waterless paths, he descended towards Cooper's Creek. On November 20, three months after his departure, he established his first supply depot on the riverbank.

"Here, the travelers were held up for some time without finding a passable route north, a route where water was guaranteed. After great difficulties, they arrived at a camp they named Fort Wills. They established a post surrounded by palisades, situated halfway between Melbourne and the Gulf of Carpentaria. There, Burke divided his party in two. One, under Brahe's command, was to remain at Fort Wills for three months or more, provided supplies did not run out, and await the return of the other. This latter group consisted only of Burke, King, Gray, and Wills. They were taking six camels with them."

"They were carrying three months' worth of provisions, that is to say, three quintals of flour, fifty pounds of rice, fifty pounds of oat flour, one quintal of dried horse meat, one hundred pounds of salted pork and bacon, and thirty pounds of biscuit, all for a journey of six hundred leagues, there and back.

"These four men set off. After the arduous crossing of a stony desert, they arrived at the River Eyre, at the furthest point reached by Sturt in 1845, and, going up the one hundred and fortieth meridian as exactly as possible, they pointed north.

"On January 7, they crossed the tropic under a blazing sun, deceived by misleading mirages, often deprived of water, sometimes refreshed by great storms, finding here and there some wandering natives of whom

they had no cause to complain; in short, little hindered by the difficulties of a route that was not blocked by lakes, rivers, or mountains.

“On January 12th, some sandstone hills appeared to the north, including Mount Forbes, and a succession of granite ranges. There, the hardships were great. They barely advanced. The animals refused to move forward: ‘Always in the ranges! The camels are sweating with fear!’ wrote Burke in his travel journal. Nevertheless, through sheer determination, the explorers reached the banks of the Turner River, then the upper reaches of the Flinders River, seen by Stokes in 1841, which flows into the Gulf of Carpentaria between curtains of palm and eucalyptus trees.”

"The approaches to the ocean were marked by a series of marshy terrains. One of the camels perished there. The others refused to go any further. King and Gray had to stay with them. Burke and Wills continued north, and, after great difficulties very obscurely recorded in their notes, they arrived at a point where the sea's flow covered the marshes, but they did not see the ocean. This was February 11, 1861."

"So," said Lady Glenarvan, "these bold men could not go any further?"

“No, madam,” replied Paganel. The marshland was giving way beneath their feet, and they had to consider rejoining their companions at Fort Wills. A sad return, I assure you! It was with trudging on, weak and exhausted, that Burke and his comrade found Gray and King. Then the expedition, heading south along the route they had already taken, made for Cooper’s Creek.

"We do not know exactly the trials, dangers, and sufferings of this journey, because the explorers' notebooks are missing notes. But it must have been terrible."

“Indeed, by April, having arrived in Cooper’s Valley, only three remained. Gray had just succumbed to his ordeal. Four camels had perished. However, if Burke manages to reach Fort Wills, where Brahe awaits him with his supply depot, he and his companions will be saved. They redouble their efforts; they dragged themselves along for a few more days; on April 21st, they sighted the fort’s palisades, they reached it!… That day, after five months of fruitless waiting, Brahe had left.”

"Gone!" cried young Robert.

—Yes, gone! That very day, by a deplorable twist of fate! The note left by Brahe wasn't even seven hours old! Burke couldn't even think of joining him. The unfortunate abandoned men managed to replenish their supplies somewhat with provisions from the depot. But they lacked means of transport, and one hundred and fifty leagues still separated them from the Darling.

"It was then that Burke, contrary to Wills' opinion, considered reaching the Australian settlements, located near Mount Hopeless, sixty leagues from Fort Wills. They set off.

"Of the two camels that remained, one perished in a muddy tributary of Cooper's Creek; the other could no longer take a step, it had to be slaughtered, and its flesh eaten. Soon the provisions were devoured."

"The three unfortunate men are reduced to eating ' *nardou* ,' an aquatic plant whose spores are edible. Lacking water and the means to

transport it, they cannot leave the banks of the Cooper River. A fire burns their cabin and their camping gear. They are lost! They have no choice but to die!"

“Burke called King to him: ‘I have only a few hours left to live,’ he said; ‘here is my watch and my notes. When I am dead, I wish you to place a pistol in my right hand, and leave me as I am, without burying me!’ Having said this, Burke spoke no more, and he expired the next morning at eight o’clock.”

"King, terrified and distraught, went in search of an Australian tribe. When he returned, Wills had also succumbed. As for King, he was taken in by natives and, in September, found by Mr. Howitt's expedition, sent to search for Burke at the same time as Mac Kinlay and Landsborough. Thus, of the four explorers, only one survived this crossing of the Australian continent."

Paganel's tale had left a painful impression on his listeners. Each thought of Captain Grant, who perhaps, like Burke and his companions, was wandering amidst that treacherous continent. Had the shipwrecked survivors escaped the suffering that decimated those intrepid pioneers? This comparison was so natural that tears welled up in Mary Grant's eyes.

"My father! My poor father!" she murmured.

"Miss Mary! Miss Mary!" cried John Mangles. "To endure such hardships, one must face the interior! Captain Grant, like King, is in the hands of the natives, and like King, he will be saved! He has never been in such dire circumstances!"

"Never," added Paganel, "and I repeat, my dear miss, Australians are hospitable."

"God hear you!" replied the young girl.

"And Stuart?" asked Glenarvan, who wanted to divert the course of these sad thoughts.

“Stuart?” replied Paganel. “Oh! Stuart was luckier, and his name is famous in Australian annals. As early as 1848, John MacDouall Stuart, your compatriot, my friends, was preparing for his travels by accompanying Sturt in the deserts north of Adelaide. In 1860, followed by only two men, he attempted, but in vain, to penetrate the interior of Australia. He was not a man to be discouraged. On January 1, 1861, he left Chambers Creek at the head of eleven determined companions and stopped only sixty leagues from the Gulf of Carpentaria; but, running out of supplies, he had to return to Adelaide without having crossed the formidable continent. However, he dared to tempt fate once more and organized a third expedition which, this time, was to reach the goal so ardently desired.”

"The Parliament of South Australia warmly sponsored this new exploration and voted a subsidy of two thousand pounds sterling. Stuart took all the precautions suggested by his pioneering experience. His friends, Waterhouse the naturalist, Thring, Kekwick, his old companions, Woodforde, Auld, ten in all, joined him. He carried twenty American leather skins, each holding seven gallons, and on April 5, 1862, the expedition was reunited at Newcastle Water Basin, beyond the eighteenth degree of latitude, at the very point Stuart had been unable to go beyond. The line of his route followed approximately the

131st meridian, and, consequently, deviated seven degrees west of Burke's."

"The Newcastle-Water basin was to be the base for new explorations. Stuart, surrounded by thick woods, tried in vain to pass to the north and northeast. He had the same failure to reach the Victoria River to the west; impenetrable bushes blocked every exit."

“Stuart then resolved to change his camp, and he managed to move it a little further north, to Hower Marsh. Then, heading east, he encountered the Daily Creek in the middle of grassy plains, which he followed upstream for about thirty miles.

"The country was becoming magnificent; its pastures would have made a squatter's joy and fortune; the eucalyptus trees grew to a prodigious height. Stuart, amazed, continued to advance; he reached the banks of the Strangway River and Roper's Creek, discovered by Leichardt; their waters flowed amidst palm trees worthy of this tropical region; there lived tribes of natives who gave a warm welcome to the explorers."

"From this point, the expedition turned north-northwest, searching through terrain covered with sandstone and iron-rich rocks for the sources of the Adelaide River, which flows into the Gulf of Van Diemen. It then crossed Arnhem Land, amidst cabbage palms, bamboo, pines, and pandanus trees. The Adelaide widened; its banks became marshy; the sea was near."

“On Tuesday, July 22nd, Stuart camped in the Fresh-Water marshes, greatly hampered by countless streams that cut across his path. He sent three of his companions to find passable routes; the next day,

sometimes skirting impassable creeks, sometimes getting bogged down in muddy ground, he reached some high, grassy plains where clumps of gum trees and trees with fibrous bark grew; there, flocks of geese, ibises, and waterfowl of extreme savagery flew. There were few or no natives to be seen. Only a few wisps of smoke from distant encampments."

"On July 24, nine months after leaving Adelaide, Stuart set off at 8:20 in the morning, heading north; he intended to reach the sea that same day; the land was slightly elevated, scattered with iron ore and volcanic rocks; the trees were becoming small; they took on a maritime appearance; a wide alluvial valley appeared, bordered beyond by a curtain of shrubs. Stuart distinctly heard the sound of the breaking waves, but he said nothing to his companions. They entered a thicket choked with wild vine tendrils."

"Stuart takes a few steps. He is on the shores of the Indian Ocean! "The sea! The sea!" cries Thring in astonishment! The others run up, and three prolonged hurrahs greet the Indian Ocean.

"The continent had just been crossed for the fourth time!"

"Stuart, following the promise made to Governor Sir Richard Macdonnell, bathed his feet and washed his face and hands in the waves of the sea.

"Then he returned to the valley and wrote his initials JMD S on a tree. A camp was set up near a small stream with running water.

"The next day, Thring went to reconsider whether it was possible to reach the mouth of the Adelaide River from the southwest; but the

ground was too marshy for the horses' feet; it had to be abandoned.

"Then Stuart chose a tall tree in a clearing. He cut off its lower branches, and at the top he had the Australian flag unfurled. On the tree these words were inscribed in the bark: *it is one foot south that you must dig the soil* ."

"And if some traveler ever digs the earth at the indicated spot, he will find a tin box, and in that box this document whose words are engraved in my memory: *Great Exploration and Crossing from South to North Australia* .

"The explorers under the command of John MacDouall Stuart arrived here on July 25, 1862, having traversed the whole of Australia from the South Sea to the shores of the Indian Ocean, passing through the center of the continent. They had left Adelaide on October 26, 1861, and were departing on January 21, 1862, from the last station in the colony heading north. In memory of this happy event, they have raised here the Australian flag bearing the name of the expedition's leader. All is well. God bless the Queen."

"The signatures of Stuart and his companions follow.

"Thus was recorded this great event which had an immense impact throughout the world.

"And have all these brave men seen their friends from the south again?" asked Lady Helena.

“Yes, madam,” replied Paganel; “all of them, but not without cruel hardships. Stuart suffered the most; his health was gravely compromised by scurvy when he resumed his journey to Adelaide. By

the beginning of September, his illness had progressed so far that he did not believe he would ever see inhabited districts again. He could no longer stay in the saddle; he traveled lying down in a palanquin suspended between two horses. At the end of October, coughing up blood brought him to the brink of death. A horse was killed to make broth for him; on October 28, he thought he would die, when a life-saving crisis saved him, and on December 10, the entire small party reached the first settlements."

"It was on December 17th that Stuart entered Adelaide amidst an enthusiastic crowd. But his health was still failing, and soon after receiving the great gold medal of the Geographical Society, he embarked on the *Indus* for his beloved Scotland, his homeland, where we will see him again upon our return."

"He was a man who possessed moral energy to the highest degree," said Glenarvan, "and, even more than physical strength, it leads to the accomplishment of great things. Scotland is rightly proud to count him among its sons."

"And since Stuart," asked Lady Helena, "has no traveler attempted any new discoveries?"

"Yes, madam," replied Paganel. "I have often spoken to you of Leichardt. This traveler had already made a remarkable exploration of northern Australia in 1844. In 1848, he undertook a second expedition to the northeast. For seventeen years, he has not been heard from. Last year, the renowned botanist, Dr. Muller, of Melbourne, organized a public subscription to cover the costs of an expedition. This expedition was quickly funded, and a troop of courageous squatters, commanded

by the intelligent and audacious MacIntyre, left the pastures of the Paroo River on June 21, 1864. As I speak to you, he must have ventured deep into the interior of the continent in search of Leichardt. May he succeed, and may we, like him, find our dear friends!”

Thus ended the geographer's tale. The hour was late. Paganel was thanked, and a few moments later everyone was sleeping peacefully, while the clock-bird, hidden in the foliage of the white gum trees, regularly ticked the seconds of this tranquil night.

## Chapter XII *The Melbourne to Sandhurst Railway*

The major had watched with some apprehension as Ayrton left the Wimerra camp to fetch a blacksmith from the Black Point station. But he said nothing of his personal misgivings and simply kept watch over the area around the river. The tranquility of the peaceful countryside remained undisturbed, and after a few hours of darkness, the sun reappeared above the horizon.

For his part, Glenarvan's only fear was seeing Ayrton return alone. Lacking workers, the wagon could not resume its journey. The trip was halted for perhaps several days, and Glenarvan, impatient to succeed and eager to reach his goal, would not tolerate any delays.

Ayrton, fortunately, had wasted neither his time nor his efforts. The next day he reappeared at daybreak. A man accompanied him, who claimed to be the blacksmith from the Black Point station.

He was a robust fellow, tall in stature, but with a low, bestial face that did not inspire confidence. It mattered little, in short, whether he knew

his trade. In any case, he hardly spoke, and his mouth was not wasted on useless words.

"Is he a capable worker?" John Mangles asked the quartermaster.

“I don’t know him any better than you do, Captain,” replied Ayrton. “ We’ll see.”

The blacksmith set to work. He was a man of the trade, as was evident from the way he repaired the front axle of the wagon. He worked skillfully, with uncommon vigor. The major observed that the flesh of his wrists, badly eroded, showed a dark ring of extravasated blood. This was evidence of a recent wound, poorly concealed by the sleeves of a poor woolen shirt. Mac Nabbs questioned the blacksmith about these erosions, which must be very painful. But the blacksmith did not reply and continued his work.

Two hours later, the damage to the cart was repaired.

As for Glenarvan's horse, it was quickly done. The farrier had taken care to bring ready-made horseshoes. These shoes had a distinctive feature that did not escape the major's notice: a cloverleaf roughly cut into their front part. Mac Nabbs showed it to Ayrton.

"That's the Black-Point mark," replied the quartermaster. "It allows us to follow the trail of horses that stray from the station, and not confuse it with others."

Soon the horseshoes were fitted to the horse's hooves.

Then the blacksmith demanded his wages, and left without uttering four words.

Half an hour later, the travelers were on their way. Beyond the curtains of mimosa stretched a wide open space that truly deserved its name, "open plain." A few fragments of quartz and ferruginous rock lay scattered among the bushes, tall grasses, and palisades where numerous herds were penned. A few miles further on, the wagon wheels cut deep into lake-covered ground, where irregular creeks murmured, half-hidden beneath a curtain of gigantic reeds.

Then we passed by vast salt lagoons, in full evaporation. The journey was easy, and, it must be added, without boredom.

Lady Helena invited the cavaliers to visit her one after the other, for her drawing room was very small.

But everyone thus found respite from the weariness of riding and recreation in the conversation of this amiable woman. Lady Helena, assisted by Miss Mary, gracefully hosted guests from her traveling household. John Mangles was not forgotten in these daily invitations, and his somewhat serious conversation was not at all displeasing. On the contrary.

This is how they cut diagonally across the *mail road* from Growland to Horsham, a very dusty road that was scarcely used by foot soldiers. They skirted a few low hilltops as they passed the edge of Talbot County, and by evening the troop had arrived three miles above Maryborough. A fine rain was falling, which in any other country would have soaked the ground; but here the air absorbed the moisture so wonderfully that the encampment suffered no ill effects.

The following day, December 29th, the journey was somewhat delayed by a series of hillocks that formed a miniature Switzerland. It

was a constant series of ascents and descents, with many unpleasant jolts. The travelers walked part of the way and didn't complain.

At eleven o'clock, they arrived at Carlsbrook, a fairly large town. Ayrton suggested skirting the town without entering it, in order, he said, to save time. Glenarvan shared his opinion, but Paganel, always eager for new sights, wanted to visit Carlsbrook. He was allowed to do so, and the wagon continued its slow journey.

Paganel, as was his custom, took Robert with him. His visit to the town hall was brief, but it was enough to give him an accurate picture of Australian towns. There was a bank, a courthouse, a market, a school, a church, and about a hundred perfectly uniform brick houses.

The whole thing is laid out in a regular quadrilateral bisected by parallel streets, according to the English method. Nothing could be simpler, but it's less fun. As the city grows, its streets are lengthened like the trousers of a growing child, and the original symmetry remains completely undisturbed.

Carlsbrook was bustling with activity, a remarkable sign in these newly sprung cities. It seems that in Australia, towns grow like trees, basking in the sun. Busy people thronged the streets; gold shippers crowded the receiving offices, the precious metal, escorted by the native police, arriving from the mines of Bendigo and Mount Alexander. Driven by self-interest, everyone was focused on their own business, and the foreigners went unnoticed amidst this industrious population.

After an hour spent exploring Carlsbrook, the two visitors rejoined their companions across meticulously cultivated countryside. Long grasslands, known as "low-level plains," followed, dotted with countless

flocks of sheep and shepherds' huts. Then, without warning, the desert appeared, with that abruptness so characteristic of Australian nature. The Simpson Hills and Mount Tarangower marked the southernmost point of the Loddo district on the 144th parallel of longitude.

However, we had not encountered any of these aboriginal tribes living in the wild until now.

Glenarvan wondered if the Australians would be missed in Australia as the Indians had been missed in the Argentine Pampas. But Paganel informed him that, at that latitude, the savages mainly frequented the Murray plains, located a hundred miles to the east.

“We are approaching the land of gold,” he said. “In two days we will cross that opulent region of Mount Alexander. It was there that the swarm of miners descended in 1852. The natives had to flee to the deserts of the interior. We are in civilized country without it showing, and our route, before the end of this day, will have crossed the railway that connects the Murray River to the sea. Well, I must say, my friends, a railway in Australia—that seems to me a surprising thing!”

"And why is that, Paganel?" asked Glenarvan.

—Why! Because it clashes! Oh! I know that you others, used to colonizing distant possessions, you who have electric telegraphs and world's fairs in New Zealand, will find this very simple! But it confuses the mind of a Frenchman like me and muddles all his ideas about Australia.

"Because you're looking at the past and not the present," replied John Mangles.

A sharp blast of the whistle interrupted the discussion. The travelers were not a mile from the railway. A locomotive, coming from the south and traveling at a slow speed, stopped precisely at the point where the railway line and the road the wagon was following intersected. This railway, as Paganel had said, connected the capital of Victoria to the Murray, the largest river in Australia.

This immense river, discovered by Sturt in 1828, originates in the Australian Alps, swollen by the Lachlan and Darling rivers, and covers the entire northern border of the province of Victoria before flowing into Encounter Bay near Adelaide. It traverses rich, fertile lands, and squatter settlements proliferate along its course, thanks to the easy connections established by the railway with Melbourne.

This railway was then in operation for a length of one hundred and five miles between Melbourne and Sandhurst, serving Kyneton and Castlemaine. The line, under construction, continued for seventy miles to Echuca, capital of the Riverine colony, founded that same year on the Murray.

The thirty-seventh parallel crossed the railway a few miles above Castlemaine, and precisely at Camden-Bridge, a bridge thrown over the Lutton, one of the many tributaries of the Murray.

It was towards this point that Ayrton directed his chariot, preceded by the riders, who allowed themselves a moment of gallop as far as Camden-Bridge. They were drawn there, moreover, by a keen sense of curiosity.

Indeed, a considerable crowd was making its way towards the railway bridge. Residents of nearby stations were abandoning their homes;

shepherds, leaving their flocks, crowded the area around the tracks. One could hear these cries, often repeated:

"To the railway! To the railway!"

Some serious event must have occurred to cause all this commotion. Perhaps a major catastrophe.

Glenarvan, followed by his companions, quickened his pace. In a few minutes, he arrived at Camden Bridge. There, he understood the reason for the gathering.

A terrible accident had occurred, not a train collision, but a derailment and a plunge reminiscent of the worst disasters on American *railways* . The river crossed by the railway was filled with debris from the cars and locomotive. Whether the bridge had given way under the train's weight or the train had thrown itself off the tracks, five out of six cars had been swept into the Lutton River following the locomotive.

Only the last wagon, miraculously preserved by the breaking of its chain, remained on the track, a mere half-fathom from the abyss. Below, there was nothing but a grim heap of blackened and bent axles, smashed box carriages, twisted rails, and charred sleepers. The boiler, exploding on impact, had hurled its shards of metal over enormous distances.

From this mass of shapeless objects, a few flames and spirals of steam mingled with black smoke still emerged. After the horrific fall, the fire was even more horrific! Large trails of blood, scattered limbs, and

sections of charred corpses appeared here and there, and no one dared to calculate the number of victims piled beneath the wreckage.

Glenarvan, Paganel, the major, Mangles, mingled with the crowd, listened to the conversations circulating among them. Each was trying to explain the disaster, while the rescue efforts continued.

"The bridge has broken," he said.

"Broken!" they replied. "It tore so little that it's still intact. They forgot to close it when the train went by. That's all."

It was, in fact, a swing bridge that opened for the use of the river traffic. Had the guard, through an unforgivable oversight, forgotten to close it, and had the train, traveling at full speed, suddenly lost its way, plunged into the Lutton River? This hypothesis seemed quite plausible, for while one half of the bridge lay beneath the wreckage of the wagons, the other half, brought to the opposite bank, still hung from its intact chains. There was no longer any doubt! The guard's negligence had caused this catastrophe.

The accident occurred during the night, on express train No. 37, which departed Melbourne at 11:45 PM. It must have been 3:15 AM when the train, 25 minutes after leaving Castlemaine station, reached Camden Bridge and came to a stop there.

Immediately, the passengers and employees of the last carriage set about calling for help; but the telegraph, its poles lying on the ground, was no longer functioning. It took the Castlemaine authorities three hours to reach the scene of the disaster. It was therefore six o'clock in the morning when the rescue operation was organized under the

direction of Mr. Mitchell, the colony's *surveyor* general, and a squad of policemen commanded by a police officer. The squatters and their people had come to help and first worked to extinguish the fire that was consuming the heap of debris with insurmountable intensity.

A few unrecognizable corpses lay on the embankment's banks. But it was impossible to recover any living being from this inferno. The fire had quickly finished its work of destruction. Of the train's passengers, whose number was unknown, only ten survived, those from the last carriage.

The railway administration had just sent a rescue locomotive to bring them back to Castlemaine.

However, Lord Glenarvan, having introduced himself to the *Surveyor* General, was conversing with him and the police officer. The latter was a tall, thin man, imperturbably calm, and if he had any sensitivity in his heart, he betrayed nothing of it in his impassive features. Faced with this disaster, he was like a mathematician before a problem; he was trying to solve it and uncover the unknown. Thus, to Glenarvan's words, "This is a great misfortune!" he calmly replied:

“Better than that, *my lord* .”

"Better than that!" cried Glenarvan, shocked by the phrase, "and what is better than misfortune?"

"A crime!" replied the police officer calmly.

Glenarvan, without dwelling on the inappropriateness of the expression, turned to Mr. Mitchell, questioning him with his eyes.

“Yes, *my lord* ,” replied the *surveyor* general, “our investigation has led us to this certainty: that the disaster is the result of a crime. The last baggage car was looted. The surviving passengers were attacked by a group of five or six criminals. The bridge was opened intentionally, not through negligence, and if we consider this fact in conjunction with the disappearance of the guard, we must conclude that this wretch made himself an accomplice of the criminals.”

The police officer, at this deduction from the *surveyor* general, shook his head.

"You don't share my opinion?" Mr. Mitchell asked him.

—No, as far as the guard's complicity is concerned.

*surveyor general* continued, “this complicity allows us to attribute the crime to the savages who roam the Murray countryside. Without the guard, these natives could not have opened this swing bridge, the mechanism of which is unknown to them.”

"That's right," replied the police officer.

—Now, added Mr Mitchell, it is undisputed, by the deposition of a boatman whose boat passed through Camden-Bridge at ten forty in the evening, that the bridge was properly closed after his passage.

-Perfect.

"Thus, the guard's complicity seems to me to be established beyond any doubt."

The police officer shook his head in a continuous motion.

"But then, sir," Glenarvan asked him, "you do not attribute the crime to the savages?"

—Not at all.

"To whom, then?"

At that moment, a considerable commotion arose half a mile upstream. A crowd had formed and was rapidly growing. It soon reached the station. In the center of the crowd, two men were carrying a corpse. It was the guard's body, already cold. A dagger had pierced his heart. The murderers, by dragging his body away from Camden Bridge, had undoubtedly intended to mislead the police during their initial investigation. Now, this discovery fully justified the officer's suspicions. The savages had nothing to do with the crime.

"Those who carried out the attack," he said, "are people familiar with the use of this small instrument."

And speaking thus, he showed a pair of "darbies," a kind of handcuff made of a double iron ring fitted with a lock.

"Before long," he added, "I will have the pleasure of offering them this bracelet as a New Year's gift."

—But then you suspect something?…

—People who have “traveled for free on Her Majesty’s ships.”

"What! Convicts!" exclaimed Paganel, who knew this metaphor used in the Australian colonies.

"I thought," Glenarvan observed, "that those transported did not have the right to reside in the province of Victoria?"

"Pshaw!" replied the police officer, "if they don't have that right, they'll take it! Convicts sometimes escape, and I'm quite mistaken, or these ones come straight from Perth. Well, they'll go back there, you can believe me."

Mr. Mitchell nodded in agreement with the police officer's words. At that moment, the wagon was approaching the railway crossing.

Glenarvan wished to spare the female travelers the horrible sight of Camden Bridge. He greeted the *Surveyor* General, took his leave, and signaled his friends to follow him.

"That's no reason," he said, "to interrupt our journey."

Arriving at the wagon, Glenarvan simply told Lady Helena about a railway accident, without mentioning the role crime had played in the disaster; nor did he mention the presence of a band of convicts in the area, reserving the right to inform Ayrton about it privately. Then, the small group crossed the railway a few hundred fathoms above the bridge and resumed their usual eastward route.

## Chapter XIII *A First Prize in Geography*

A few hills etched their elongated profiles against the horizon, marking the end of the plain two miles from the railway. The carriage soon entered a series of narrow, winding gorges. These led to a charming region where beautiful trees, not forming forests but clustered in isolated groups, grew with a truly tropical exuberance.

Among the most remarkable were the casuarinas, which seemed to have borrowed the robust structure of their trunks from the oak, the fragrant pods from the acacia, and the roughness of their slightly glaucous leaves from the pine. Mingling with their branches were the curious cones of the banksia latifolia, whose slenderness possessed a supreme elegance. Large shrubs with drooping branches created the effect of green water overflowing from overflowing basins in the thickets. The eye hesitated among all these natural wonders, unsure where to focus its admiration.

The small group had stopped for a moment. Ayrton, on Lady Helena's orders, had held back his team. The large discs of the wagon ceased their clattering on the quartz sand. Long green carpets stretched out beneath the groups of trees; only a few mounds in the ground, regular bulges, divided them into still quite distinct squares, like a vast chessboard.

Paganel was not mistaken when he saw these verdant solitudes, so poetically arranged for eternal rest. He recognized these burial plots, whose last traces are now being erased by the grass, and which the traveler so rarely encounters on Australian soil.

"The hedgerows of death," he said.

Indeed, an indigenous cemetery lay there before his eyes, but so fresh, so shady, so enlivened by joyful flocks of birds, so inviting, that it stirred no sad thoughts. One might readily have mistaken it for one of the Gardens of Eden, when death was banished from the earth. It seemed made for the living. But these graves, which the native maintained with pious care, were already disappearing beneath a rising tide of greenery.

Conquest had driven the Australian far from the land where his ancestors rested, and colonization would soon deliver these fields of death to the teeth of herds. Thus, these groves have become rare, and how many are already trampled underfoot by the indifferent traveler, covering an entire recent generation!

However, Paganel and Robert, ahead of their companions, followed small, shady paths between the burial mounds. They chatted and learned from one another, for the geographer claimed he gained much from young Grant's conversation. But they had not gone a quarter of a mile when Lord Glenarvan saw them stop, then dismount, and finally bend down towards the ground. They seemed to be examining a very curious object, judging by their expressive gestures.

Ayrton spurred his team, and the wagon soon caught up with the two friends. The reason for their stop and their astonishment was immediately apparent. A native child, a little boy of eight, dressed in European clothes, was sleeping peacefully in the shade of a magnificent *banksia tree* . It was difficult to mistake the distinctive features of his race:

His frizzy hair, his almost black complexion, his flat nose, his thick lips, and his unusually long arms immediately placed him among the natives of the interior. But an intelligent face distinguished him, and certainly education had already lifted this young savage from his lowly origins.

Lady Helena, very interested in the sight of him, dismounted, and soon the whole troop surrounded the little native, who was sleeping soundly.

"Poor child," said Mary Grant, "is he then lost in this desert?"

"I suppose," replied Lady Helena, "that he came from afar to visit these groves of death! Those he loves surely rest here!"

"But we mustn't abandon him!" said Robert. "He's alone, and…"

Robert's charitable words were interrupted by a movement from the young native, who turned around without waking; but then everyone was extremely surprised to see a sign on his shoulders and to read the following inscription: *toliné, to be conducted to echuca, ... Etc*

"That's the English for you!" cried Paganel. "They send a child off like a parcel! They register him like a package! I was told so, but I didn't want to believe it."

"Poor little thing!" said Lady Helena. "Was he on that train that derailed at Camden Bridge? Perhaps his parents perished, and now he's all alone in the world!"

"I don't think so, madam," replied John Mangles. "On the contrary, this sign indicates that he was travelling alone."

"He's waking up," said Mary Grant.

Indeed, the child was waking up. Little by little his eyes opened and then closed again, hurt by the brightness of the day. But Lady Helena took his hand; he stood up and cast an astonished glance at the group of travelers.

A feeling of fear first altered his features, but the presence of Lady Glenarvan reassured him.

"Do you understand English, my friend?" the young woman asked him.

"I understand it and I speak it," replied the child in the language of the travelers, but with a very strong accent.

Its pronunciation was reminiscent of that of French people who speak in the language of the United Kingdom.

"What is your name?" asked Lady Helena.

"Toliné," replied the little native.

"Ah! Toliné!" exclaimed Paganel. "If I'm not mistaken, that word means 'tree bark' in Australian?"

Toliné nodded and turned his gaze back to the female travelers.

"Where do you come from, my friend?" Lady Helena continued.

—From Melbourne, via the Sandhurst railway.

"Were you on that train that derailed at Camden Bridge?" asked Glenarvan.

"Yes, sir," replied Toline, "but the God of the Bible protected me."

—Were you travelling alone?

—Alone. Reverend Paxton had entrusted me to the care of Jeffries Smith. Unfortunately, the poor postman was killed!

—And on that train, you didn't know anyone?

"No one, sir, but God watches over children and never abandons them!"

Toline spoke these things in a gentle voice that went straight to the heart. When he spoke of God, his words became more serious, his eyes lit up, and one could feel all the fervor contained in that young soul.

This religious enthusiasm at such a tender age is easily explained. This child was one of those young natives baptized by English missionaries and raised by them in the austere practices of the Methodist religion. His calm answers, his neat appearance, his dark suit already gave him the air of a little reverend.

But where was he going through these deserted regions, and why had he left Camden-Bridge?

Lady Helena questioned him about it.

“I was returning to my tribe in Lachlan,” he replied. “I want to see my family again.”

"Australians?" asked John Mangles.

"Australians from Lachlan," replied Toliné.

"And you have a father, a mother?" said Robert Grant.

“Yes, my brother,” replied Toliné, offering his hand to young Grant, who was deeply moved by the term “brother.” He kissed the little native, and that was all it took to make them friends.

However, the travelers, keenly interested in the answers of this young savage, gradually sat down around him and listened to him speak. The

sun was already setting behind the tall trees.

Since the spot seemed suitable for a rest stop, and it mattered little to travel a few more miles before nightfall, Glenarvan gave the order to prepare everything for the camp. Ayrton unharnessed the oxen; with the help of Mulrady and Wilson, he hobbled them and let them graze as they pleased. The tent was pitched. Olbinett prepared the meal. Toliné agreed to eat his share, not without some ceremony, although he was hungry. So they sat down to eat, the two children side by side. Robert chose the best pieces for his new companion, and Toliné accepted them with a timid and charming grace.

The conversation, however, didn't drag. Everyone was interested in the child and asked him questions. They wanted to know his story. It was quite simple. His past was that of those poor natives entrusted from a very young age to the care of charitable organizations by the tribes neighboring the colony. Australians have gentle customs. They don't profess toward their invaders the fierce hatred that characterizes the New Zealanders, and perhaps some tribes of northern Australia. They can be seen frequenting the major cities—Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne—and even walking around in rather primitive clothing.

They trade small items from their industry, hunting or fishing equipment, weapons, and some tribal chiefs, no doubt for economic reasons, willingly allow their children to benefit from an English education.

So did Toliné's parents, veritable savages of Lachlan, a vast region beyond the Murray River. For the five years he had lived in Melbourne, the child had not seen any of his kin. And yet, the enduring feeling of

family still lived in his heart, and it was to see his tribe again, perhaps scattered, his family, undoubtedly decimated, that he had resumed the arduous journey through the desert.

"And after you have kissed your parents, you will return to Melbourne, my child?" Lady Glenarvan asked him.

"Yes, madam," replied Toliné, looking at the young woman with a sincere expression of tenderness.

—And what do you want to do one day?

"I want to rescue my brothers from poverty and ignorance! I want to educate them, to lead them to know and love God! I want to be a missionary!"

These words, spoken with such enthusiasm by an eight-year-old, might have seemed laughable to frivolous and mocking minds; but they were understood and respected by these serious Scotsmen; they admired the devout courage of this young disciple, already prepared for battle. Paganel was deeply moved and felt a genuine sympathy for the young native boy.

Need I say it? Up until now, this savage in European dress hadn't appealed to him much. He hadn't come to Australia to see Australians in frock coats!

He wanted them adorned with a simple tattoo. This "decent" attire confounded his ideas. But once Toliné had spoken so passionately, he changed his mind and declared himself his admirer. The end of this conversation, moreover, was to make the good geographer the young Australian's best friend.

Indeed, to a question from Lady Helena, Toliné replied that he was studying "at the Normal School" in Melbourne, run by Reverend M. Paxton.

"And what are they teaching you at this school?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

—I am being taught the Bible, mathematics, geography…

"Ah! Geography!" exclaimed Paganel, struck in his sensitive spot.

"Yes, sir," replied Toliné. "I even won a first prize in geography before the January holidays."

—You won a geography prize, my boy?

"Here it is, sir," said Toliné, pulling a book from his pocket.

It was a 32mo Bible, well bound. On the back of the first page, one could read this inscription: *Melbourne Normal School, 1st prize in geography, Toliné du Lachlan* .

Paganel couldn't resist any longer! An Australian skilled in geography amazed him, and he kissed Toliné on both cheeks, no less than if he had been Reverend Paxton himself on prize-giving day. Paganel, however, should have known that this is not uncommon in Australian schools. Young savages are very adept at grasping geographical sciences; they readily take to them and, on the contrary, show a mind quite resistant to calculations.

Toliné, for his part, had not understood the scholar's sudden caresses. Lady Helena had to explain to him that Paganel was a famous geographer, and, if necessary, a distinguished professor.

"A geography professor!" replied Toliné. "Oh! sir, ask me!"

"Question you, my boy!" said Paganel, "I couldn't be happier! I was even going to do it without your permission. I'm not displeased to see how they teach geography at the Melbourne Normal School!"

—And what if Toliné were to show you a thing or two, Paganel! said Mac Nabbs.

"For example!" exclaimed the geographer, "to teach the secretary of the French Geographical Society a lesson!"

Then, securing his glasses on his nose, straightening his tall stature, and adopting a serious tone, as befits a professor, he began his questioning.

"Student Toliné," he said, "stand up."

Toliné, who was standing, could not rise any higher. He therefore waited in a modest posture for the geographer's questions.

"Student Toliné," Paganel continued, "what are the five parts of the world?"

"Oceania, Asia, Africa, America and Europe," replied
Toline.

—Perfect. Let's talk about Oceania first, since we're on the subject right now. What are its main divisions?

—It is divided into Polynesia, Malaysia, Micronesia and Megalesia. Its main islands are Australia, which belongs to the English, New Zealand, which belongs to the English, Tasmania, which belongs to the English,

the Chatham Islands, Auckland, Macquarie, Kermadec, Makin, Maraki, etc., which belong to the English.

—Well, replied Paganel, but what about New Caledonia, the Sandwich Islands, the Mendana Islands, the Pomotou Islands?

—These are islands placed under the protectorate of Great Britain.

"What! Under the protectorate of Great Britain!" exclaimed Paganel. "But it seems to me that France, on the contrary…"

"France!" said the little boy, looking astonished.

—Well! Well! said Paganel, is this what they teach you at the Melbourne Normal School?

—Yes, Professor; isn't that good?

“Yes! Yes! Absolutely,” replied Paganel. “All of Oceania belongs to the English! It’s a settled matter! Let’s continue.”

Paganel had a look that was half-vexed, half-surprised, which delighted the major.

The questioning continued.

"Let's move on to Asia," said the geographer.

"Asia," replied Toline, "is a vast country."

Capital: Calcutta. Main cities: Bombay, Madras, Calicut, Aden, Malacca, Singapore, Pegu, Colombo; Lakshadweep Islands, Maldives, Chagos Islands, etc., etc. Belongs to the British.

—Good! Good! Student Toliné. And Africa?

—Africa contains two main colonies: in the south, the Cape Colony, with Cape Town as its capital, and in the west, the English settlements, main city: Sierra Leone.

"Well answered!" said Paganel, who was beginning to accept this fanciful Anglo-French geography, so perfectly taught! As for Algeria, Morocco, Egypt… Erased from British atlases! I would be very glad now to talk a little about America!

"It is divided," Toline continued, "into North America and South America. The former belongs to the English through Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and the United States under the administration of Governor Johnson!"

“Governor Johnson!” cried Paganel, “that successor of the great and good Lincoln, assassinated by a fanatical slave-worshipping madman! Perfect! Couldn’t be better. And as for South America, with its Guyana, its Falkland Islands, its Shetland Islands, its Georgia, its Jamaica, its Trinidad, etc., etc., it still belongs to the English! I won’t argue about that. But, for example, Toliné, I’d like to know your opinion on Europe, or rather, that of your professors?”

"Europe?" replied Toliné, who understood nothing of the geographer's animation.

—Yes! Europe! Who does Europe belong to?

"But Europe belongs to the English," replied the child in a convinced tone.

"I suspected as much," Paganel replied. "But how? That's what I want to know."

—Through England, Scotland, Ireland, Malta, the islands of Jersey and Guernsey, the Ionian Islands, the Hebrides, the Shetland Islands, the Orkney Islands…

—Good! Good, Toliné, but there are other states you're forgetting to mention, my boy!

"Which ones? Sir," replied the child, who was not disconcerted.

—Spain, Russia, Austria, Prussia, France?

"These are provinces, not states," said Toliné.

"For example!" cried Paganel, tearing his glasses from his eyes.

—Probably Spain, capital Gibraltar.

—Admirable! Perfect! Sublime! And France, for I am French and I would not be sorry to learn to whom I belong!

"France," Toliné calmly replied, "is an English province, with Calais as its capital."

"Calais!" cried Paganel. "What! You think Calais still belongs to England?"

—Probably.

—And that it's the capital of France?

"Yes, sir, and that's where the governor, Lord Napoleon, resides…"

At these last words, Paganel burst out laughing. Toliné didn't know what to think. He had been questioned, and he had answered as best he could. But the peculiarity of his answers couldn't be attributed to him; he hadn't even suspected it. However, he didn't seem disconcerted at all, and he gravely awaited the end of these incomprehensible antics.

"You see," the major said laughingly to Paganel. "Wasn't I right to claim that student Toliné would show you what you're made of?"

"Indeed! My dear Major," replied the geographer. "Ah! So that's how they teach geography in Melbourne! Those teachers at the Normal School are doing well! Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Oceania, the whole world, all English! Good heavens, with such ingenious education, I understand why the natives submit! Ah, well! Toliné, and the moon, my boy, is it English too?"

"She will be," replied the young savage gravely.

At that, Paganel stood up. He could no longer stay still. He needed to laugh freely, and he went to cross his access road a quarter of a mile from the camp.

However, Glenarvan had gone to fetch a book from the small travel library. It was Samuel Richardson's *Geography Compendium* , a work highly regarded in England, and more knowledgeable about science than the professors in Melbourne.

"Here, my child," he said to Toline, "take and keep this book. You have some misconceptions about geography that it is good to correct. I give it

to you as a memento of our meeting."

Toliné took the book without replying; he looked at it attentively, shaking his head in disbelief, without deciding to put it in his pocket.

However, night had completely fallen. It was ten o'clock in the evening. They needed to think about resting in order to get up early the next morning. Robert offered his friend Toliné half of his bunk.

The little native boy agreed.

A few moments later, Lady Helena and Mary Grant returned to the carriage, and the travelers stretched out under the tent, while Paganel's bursts of laughter still mingled with the soft, low song of the wild magpies.

But the next day, when a ray of sunlight woke the sleepers at six o'clock, they searched in vain for the Australian child. Toliné had disappeared.

Did he want to reach the lands of Lachlan without delay? Had he been hurt by Paganel's laughter?

We didn't know.

But, when Lady Helena awoke, she found on her breast a fresh bouquet of single-leaved sensitive plants, and Paganel, in his jacket pocket, Samuel Richardson's " *Geography ".*

## Chapter XIV *The Mines of Mount Alexander*

In 1814, Sir Roderick Impey Murchison, currently president of the Royal Geographical Society of London, found, through the study of their conformation, remarkable similarities between the Ural mountain range and the range which extends from north to south, not far from the southern coast of Australia.

Now, since the Urals are a gold-bearing mountain range, the learned geologist wondered if the precious metal might also be found in the Australian Andes. He was not wrong.

Indeed, two years later, some gold samples were sent to him from New South Wales, and he decided on the emigration of a large number of workers from Cornwall to the gold-bearing regions of New Holland.

It was Mr. Francis Dutton who found the first nuggets in South Australia. It was Messrs. Forbes and Smyth who discovered the first placer deposits in New South Wales.

Once the initial impetus was given, miners flocked from all corners of the globe: English, American, Italian, French, German, and Chinese. However, it was not until April 3, 1851, that Mr. Hargraves identified very rich gold deposits and offered to reveal their location to the governor of the Sydney colony, Sir Charles FitzRoy, for the modest sum of five hundred pounds sterling.

His offer was not accepted, but word of the discovery had spread. The researchers headed towards Summerhill and Leni's Pond. The town of Ophir was founded, and, through the wealth of its mining operations, it soon proved worthy of its biblical name.

Until then there was no mention of the province of Victoria, which was nevertheless to prevail due to the abundance of its lodgings.

Indeed, a few months later, in August 1851, the first gold nuggets in the province were unearthed, and soon four districts were extensively mined. These four districts were Ballarat, Ovens, Bendigo, and Mount Alexander, all very rich; but on the Ovens River, the abundance of water made the work arduous; at Ballarat, an uneven distribution of gold often thwarted the miners' plans; at Bendigo, the soil was unsuitable for the worker. At Mount Alexander, all the conditions for success were met on level ground, and this precious metal, worth up to 1,441 francs per pound, reached the highest price in all the world's markets.

It was precisely to this place, so rich in grim ruins and unexpected fortunes, that the road of the thirty-seventh parallel led Captain Harry Grant's researchers.

After walking all day on December 31st over very rough terrain that tired the horses and oxen, they caught sight of the rounded peaks of Mount Alexander. The camp was established in a narrow gorge of this small mountain range, and the animals, hobbled, went to forage among the quartz boulders that littered the ground. This was not yet the region of the exploited placer mines. Only the next day, the first day of 1866, did the wagon carve its rut into the roads of this prosperous region.

Jacques Paganel and his companions were delighted to see, as they passed by, this famous mountain, called Geboor in the Australian language. There, the whole horde of adventurers, thieves, and honest folk—those who hang and those who are hanged—rushed. At the first whispers of the great discovery, in that golden year of 1851, towns,

fields, and ships were abandoned by their inhabitants, squatters, and sailors.

The gold rush became epidemic, contagious like the plague, and how many died, who thought they had already struck it rich! Prodigal nature had, it was said, sown millions over more than twenty-five degrees of latitude in that marvelous Australia.

It was harvest time, and these new harvesters rushed to the reaping. The digger's trade took precedence over all others, and while many succumbed to the task, broken by fatigue, some nevertheless grew rich with a single stroke of the pickaxe. The ruins were kept quiet, the fortunes were whispered about. These twists of fate resonated throughout the five continents. Soon, waves of ambitious people from every caste streamed back to the shores of Australia, and during the last four months of 1852, Melbourne alone received fifty-four thousand emigrants—an army, but an army without a leader, without discipline, an army in the wake of a victory that had not yet been won; in short, fifty-four thousand plunderers of the most malevolent kind.

During those first years of wild frenzy, there was indescribable chaos. However, the English, with their customary energy, took control of the situation. The local police and gendarmes abandoned the side of the thieves for that of honest citizens. There was a complete reversal of fortune. Thus, Glenarvan was to find nothing of the violent scenes of 1852. Thirteen years had passed since then, and now the exploitation of the goldfields was carried out methodically, according to the rules of a rigorous organization.

Moreover, the placer deposits were already being exhausted. By dint of digging them, they reached the bottom. And how could these treasures accumulated by nature not have been depleted, since, from 1852 to 1858, miners extracted 63,007,478 pounds sterling from the soil of Victoria? Emigrants therefore decreased considerably, and they flocked to still virgin lands. Thus, the "gold fields," the newly discovered gold deposits at Otago and Marlborough in New Zealand, are currently being riddled with thousands of two-legged, featherless termites.

Around eleven o'clock, we arrived at the center of the mining operations. There, a veritable town had sprung up, with factories, a bank, a church, a barracks, a cottage, and newspaper offices. Hotels, farms, and villas were plentiful. There was even a theater, ten shillings a seat, and it was very popular. A local play entitled *Francis Obadiag, or the Happy Digger , was being performed with great success* . At the end, the hero, in a final act of despair, gave his pickaxe one last blow and unearthed a nugget of unbelievable weight.

Glenarvan, curious to visit this vast estate on Mount Alexander, let the wagon go ahead, driven by Ayrton and Mulrady. He was to join them a few hours later. Paganel was delighted by this determination, and, as was his custom, he became the guide and *leader* of the small group.

Following his advice, we headed towards the bank. The streets were wide, paved, and carefully watered.

Gigantic posters of *Golden Company (Limited)* , *Digger's General Office* , and *Nugget's Union* demanded attention.

The combined efforts of labor and capital had replaced the isolated action of the miner. Everywhere one could hear the machines that

washed the sands and pulverized the precious quartz.

Beyond the dwellings lay the placer mines, that is to say, vast expanses of land given over to exploitation. There, miners hired on behalf of the companies and handsomely paid by them dug.

The eye could not have counted the holes that riddled the ground. The iron of the spades gleamed in the sun and cast a ceaseless radiance of flashes. Among these workers were people of every nation. They did not quarrel, and they silently carried out their task, like wage earners.

“One shouldn’t think, however,” said Paganel, “that there are no longer any of those feverish prospectors on Australian soil who come to try their luck in the mining business. I know full well that most of them hire themselves out to the companies, and they have to, since all the gold-bearing land is sold or leased by the government. But for those who have nothing, who can neither rent nor buy, there is still a chance to get rich.”

"Which one?" asked Lady Helena.

"The chance to practice 'jumping,'" replied Paganel. "Thus, we others, who have no rights to these investments, could nevertheless—with great luck, of course—make a fortune."

"But how?" asked the major.

—By jumping, as I had the honor of telling you.

"What is jumping?" the major asked again.

—It is an accepted convention among minors, which often leads to violence and disorder, but which the authorities have never been able

to abolish.

"Come on, Paganel," said Mac Nabbs, "you're making our mouths water."

"Well, it's understood that any land in the mining center that hasn't been worked for twenty-four hours, except on major holidays, falls into the public domain. Whoever takes possession of it can dig it and become rich, if heaven helps them. So, Robert, my boy, try to find one of these abandoned holes, and it's yours!"

"Mr. Paganel," said Mary Grant, "do not give my brother such ideas."

“I’m joking, my dear miss,” replied Paganel, “and Robert knows it well. Him, a miner? Never! Digging the earth, turning it over, cultivating it, then sowing it and demanding a whole harvest for his labors, fine. But to probe it like moles, blindly like them, to wrest a little gold from it, that’s a sorry business, and one must be abandoned by God and man to do it!”

After visiting the main mine site and traversing a transport ground, composed largely of quartz, clay shale and sand resulting from the disintegration of rocks, the travelers arrived at the bank.

It was a vast building, bearing the national flag at its summit. Lord Glenarvan was received by the Inspector General, who gave a tour of his establishment.

This is where the companies deposit the gold extracted from the earth against a receipt. It was a far cry from the early days when the miner was exploited by the colony's merchants. They paid him fifty-three shillings an ounce at the placer mines, which they then resold for

sixty-five in Melbourne! The merchant, it's true, bore the risks of transport, and since highway speculators were rampant, the escort didn't always reach its destination.

Curious gold samples were shown to the visitors, and the inspector gave them interesting details about the various methods of exploiting this metal.

It is generally found in two forms: tumbled gold and disintegrated gold. It occurs as ore, mixed with alluvial soils, or contained within its quartz gangue. Therefore, extraction methods vary depending on the nature of the terrain, involving either surface or deep excavations.

When it is rolled gold, it lies at the bottom of torrents, valleys and ravines, layered according to its size, first the grains, then the flakes, and finally the sequins.

If, on the other hand, it is disintegrated gold, whose gangue has been decomposed by the action of the air, it is concentrated on site, gathered into piles, and forms what miners call "pockets." Some of these pockets contain a fortune.

At Mount Alexander, gold is found especially in clay layers and in the crevices of slate rocks. There, the nuggets are found; there, the lucky miner has often struck it rich in placer deposits.

After examining the various gold specimens, the visitors toured the bank's mineralogical museum. There, labeled and classified, they saw all the minerals that make up the Australian soil. Gold is not its only source of wealth, and the bank can rightly be considered a vast treasure chest where nature holds its precious jewels. Beneath the glass cases

sparkled white topaz, a rival to Brazilian topaz; almadine garnet; epidote, a type of silicate with a beautiful green hue; balas ruby, represented by scarlet spinels and a pink variety of the greatest beauty; light and dark blue sapphires, such as corundum, as sought after as those from Malabar or Tibet; brilliant rutile; and finally, a small diamond crystal found on the banks of the Turon River. Nothing was lacking in this resplendent collection of precious stones, and the gold needed to set them was readily available. Unless you wanted them all assembled, you couldn't ask for more.

Glenarvan took his leave of the bank inspector, after thanking him for his cooperation, which he had greatly benefited from. Then, the visit to the investment sites resumed.

Paganel, detached as he was from worldly possessions, never took a step without his eyes searching the ground. It was beyond his control, and the jokes of his companions were of no use.

At every moment, he bent down, picked up a pebble, a piece of gangue, fragments of quartz; he examined them carefully and soon discarded them with disdain. This went on throughout the entire walk.

"Ah, Paganel," the major asked him, "have you lost something?"

"No doubt," replied Paganel, "in this land of gold and precious stones, we have always lost what we haven't found. I don't know why I would want to take away a nugget weighing a few ounces, or even twenty pounds, no more."

"And what would you do with it, my worthy friend?" said Glenarvan.

“Oh! I wouldn’t be embarrassed,” replied Paganel. “I would present it as a gift to my country! I would deposit it in the Bank of France…”

—Who would accept that?

"No doubt, in the form of railway bonds!"

Paganel was congratulated on the way he intended to offer his nugget "to his country", and Lady Helena wished him luck in finding the biggest *nugget* in the world.

Joking about it, the travelers covered most of the exploited land. Everywhere the work was done regularly, mechanically, but without any excitement.

After two hours of walking, Paganel spotted a very decent inn, where he suggested sitting down until it was time to rejoin the carriage. Lady Helena agreed, and since the inn was not without refreshments, Paganel asked the innkeeper to serve some local beverage.

A "nobler" was brought for each person. Now, a *nobler* is simply grog, but grog turned upside down. Instead of putting a small glass of brandy in a large glass of water, you put a small glass of water in a large glass of brandy, add sugar, and drink. It was a bit too Australian, and, to the innkeeper's great surprise, the *nobler* , refreshed with a large carafe of water, became British grog again.

Then, we talked about mines and miners. It was now or never.

Paganel, very satisfied with what he had just seen, admitted however that it must have been more curious in the past, during the first years of exploitation of Mount Alexander.

“The land,” he said, “was then riddled with holes and teeming with legions of industrious ants—and what ants they were! All the emigrants had the zeal, but not the foresight! The gold was being squandered. It was drunk, it was gambled, and this inn where we are was a ‘hell,’ as they used to say. Throws of the dice led to stabbings. The police were powerless, and many times the colony’s governor was forced to march with regular troops against the rebellious miners. However, he managed to bring them to heel, he imposed a license fee on each operator, he enforced it with some difficulty, and, all in all, the unrest here was less than in California.”

"So, can any individual practice the mining profession?" asked Lady Helena.

“Yes, madam. You don’t need a bachelor’s degree for that. Strong arms are enough. The adventurers, driven by poverty, arrived at the mines mostly penniless, the rich with a pickaxe, the poor with a knife, and all brought to this work a fury they wouldn’t have brought to an honest man’s trade. It was a singular sight, these goldfields! The ground was covered with tents, tarpaulins, huts, and shacks made of earth, planks, and foliage. In the middle, the government marquee, adorned with the British flag, stood the blue ticking tents of its agents, and the establishments of the money changers, gold merchants, and traffickers, who speculated on this juxtaposition of wealth and poverty. They certainly got rich. You should have seen those *diggers* with their long beards and red wool shirts, living in water and mud.” The air was thick with the constant sound of pickaxes and the fetid stench of rotting animal carcasses on the ground. A suffocating dust enveloped these unfortunate souls like a cloud, contributing to an excessively high

mortality rate. Surely, in a less healthy country, this population would have been decimated by typhus. And that's if all these adventurers had succeeded! But so much misery went unrewarded, and, upon closer examination, one would find that for every miner who became wealthy, perhaps one hundred, two hundred thousand died poor and desperate.

"Could you tell us, Paganel," asked Glenarvan, "how the gold was extracted?"

“Nothing could be simpler,” replied Paganel. “The first miners panned gold, a trade still practiced in some parts of the Cévennes region of France. Today, companies operate differently; they go right back to the source, to the vein that produces the flakes, the spangles, and the nuggets. But the gold panners simply washed the gold-bearing sands, that's all. They dug into the ground, collected the layers of earth that seemed productive, and processed them with water to separate the precious ore. This washing was done using an instrument of American origin called a cradle. It was a box five to six feet long, a kind of open coffin divided into two compartments. The first was fitted with a coarse screen, superimposed on other screens with finer mesh; the second was narrower at its bottom.” The sand was placed on the sieve at one end, water was poured in, and the instrument was shaken, or rather rocked, by hand. The stones remained in the first sieve, the ore and fine sand in the others, according to their size, and the loosened earth was carried away with the water through the lower end. This was the machine generally used.

"But you still had to have it," said John Mangles.

"We bought it from the miners, whether they were rich or ruined, depending on the case," replied Paganel, "or we did without it."

"And how was she replaced?" asked Mary Grant.

"With a pan, my dear Mary, a simple iron pan; the earth was winnowed as one winnows wheat; only, instead of grains of wheat, one sometimes gathered grains of gold. During the first year, more than one miner made a fortune without any other expense. You see, my friends, those were the good old days, although boots cost 150 francs a pair, and a glass of lemonade cost 10 shillings! First come, first served. Gold was everywhere, in abundance, on the surface of the ground; the streams flowed over a bed of metal; it was even found in the streets of Melbourne; they paved the roads with gold dust."

Also, from January 26 to February 24, 1852, the precious metal transported from Mount Alexander to Melbourne under government escort amounted to eight million two hundred thirty-eight thousand seven hundred fifty francs. This makes an average of one hundred sixty-four thousand seven hundred twenty-five francs per day.

—Roughly the civil list of the Emperor of Russia, said Glenarvan.

"Poor man!" replied the major.

"Are there any mentions of sudden strokes of luck?" asked Lady Helena.

—A few, madam.

"And you know them?" said Glenarvan.

—By Jove! replied Paganel. In 1852 in the district of Ballarat, a *nugget was found* that weighed five hundred and seventy-three ounces, another in Gippsland of seven hundred and eighty-two ounces, and, in 1861, an ingot of eight hundred and thirty-four ounces.

Finally, still at Ballarat, a miner discovered a *nugget* weighing sixty-five kilograms, which, at seventeen hundred and twenty-two francs per pound, makes two hundred and twenty-three thousand eight hundred and sixty francs! A pickaxe strike that brings in eleven thousand francs in income, that's a fine strike indeed!

—By what proportion has gold production increased since the discovery of these mines? asked John Mangles.

—In an enormous proportion, my dear John. This production was only forty-seven million per year at the beginning of the century, and currently, including the product of the mines of Europe, Asia and America, it is estimated at nine hundred million, as much as a billion.

"So, Mr. Paganel," said young Robert, "right where we are, under our feet, there may be a lot of gold?"

—Yes, my boy, millions! We trample on it, that's because we despise it!

—So Australia is a privileged country?

“No, Robert,” replied the geographer. “Gold-bearing countries are not privileged. They only produce lazy populations, never strong and hardworking races. Look at Brazil, Mexico, California, Australia! Where are they in the nineteenth century? The country par excellence, my boy, is not the land of gold, it is the land of iron!”

## Chapter XV *“Australian and New Zealand gazette”*

On January 2nd, at sunrise, the travelers crossed the edge of the goldfields and the borders of Talbot County. Their horses' hooves then struck the dusty trails of Dalhousie County. A few hours later, they forded the Colban and Campaspe Rivers at 144°35' and 144°45' longitude. Half the journey was complete. Fifteen more days of such a pleasant crossing, and the small group would reach the shores of Twofold Bay.

Moreover, everyone was in good health. Paganel's promises regarding this hygienic climate were coming true. Little or no humidity, and very bearable heat. The horses and oxen didn't complain. Nor did the men.

Only one change had been made to the marching order since Camden Bridge. The tragic railway disaster, once Ayrton learned of it, prompted him to take some precautions, which had previously been quite unnecessary. The chasers had to keep the wagon in sight. During encampment hours, one of them was always on guard.

Morning and evening, the priming of the weapons was renewed. It was certain that a band of criminals was roaming the countryside, and, although nothing gave rise to immediate fears, it was necessary to be prepared for any eventuality.

Needless to say, these precautions were taken without the knowledge of Lady Helena and Mary Grant, whom Glenarvan did not want to frighten.

In the end, we were right to act that way. An imprudent act, even a negligent one, could be costly.

Glenarvan, moreover, was not alone in his concern about this state of affairs. In isolated villages and resorts, residents and squatters alike took precautions against any attack or surprise. Houses were closed at nightfall. Dogs, let loose in the fences, barked at the slightest approach. No shepherd, gathering his numerous flocks on horseback for the evening return, failed to carry a rifle slung over his saddle. News of the crime committed at Camden Bridge motivated this excessive caution, and many a settler carefully locked himself in at dusk, a time when, until then, he had slept with his windows and doors open.

The provincial administration itself displayed zeal and prudence. Detachments of native constables were sent into the countryside. The mail service was particularly ensured. Until then, the *mail coach* had traveled the highways without an escort. Now, on that day, precisely as Glenarvan's troop was crossing the road from Kilmore to Heathcote, the mail coach sped past at full horse speed, raising a swirl of dust. But no matter how quickly it disappeared, Glenarvan had seen the gleaming rifles of the policemen galloping at its doors. It was as if one had been transported back to that fateful era when the discovery of the first placer deposits brought the scum of European populations to the Australian continent.

A mile after crossing the Kilmore road, the wagon sank under a mass of giant trees, and, for the first time since Cape Bernoulli, the travelers entered one of those forests which cover an area of several degrees.

There was a cry of admiration at the sight of the two-hundred-foot-tall eucalyptus trees, whose fungal bark measured up to five inches thick. The trunks, twenty feet in circumference, furrowed by the sap of a fragrant resin, rose one hundred and fifty feet above the ground.

Not a branch, not a twig, not a capricious shoot, not even a knot altered their profile.

They could not have come out smoother from the turner's hand.

These were hundreds of precisely calibrated columns. They blossomed to an excessive height in capitals of twisted branches adorned at their ends with alternate leaves; in the axils of these leaves hung solitary flowers whose calyx formed an inverted urn.

Beneath this evergreen canopy, the air circulated freely; a ceaseless breeze drew moisture from the soil; horses, herds of oxen, and carts could pass easily between these widely spaced trees, arranged like the markers of a coppice. This was neither a dense, bramble-choked wood, nor a virgin forest barricaded with felled trunks and strung with inextricable vines, where only iron and fire can clear a path for pioneers. A carpet of grass at the base of the trees, a blanket of green at their crowns, long vistas of bold pillars, little shade, little coolness overall, a special light akin to glimmers filtering through thin fabric, regular reflections, sharp glimmers on the ground—all this constituted a bizarre spectacle, rich in novel effects. The forest of the Oceania continent is in no way reminiscent of the forests of the New World, and the eucalyptus, the "tara" of the Aborigines, classified in that family of myrtles whose different species can hardly be enumerated, is the tree par excellence of the Australian flora.

If the shadows are neither deep nor the darkness profound beneath these canopies of greenery, it is because the trees exhibit a curious anomaly in the arrangement of their leaves. None of them presents its face to the sun, but rather its sharp edge. The eye perceives only

profiles in this singular foliage. Thus, the sun's rays glide to the ground, as if passing through the raised slats of a shutter.

Everyone made this observation and seemed surprised. Why this particular arrangement? This question was naturally directed at Paganel. He replied like a man who was unperturbed by anything.

“What amazes me here,” he said, “is not the strangeness of nature; nature knows what it is doing, but botanists don’t always know what they are saying. Nature was not mistaken in giving these trees this special foliage, but men went astray in calling them ‘eucalyptus.’”

"What does that word mean?" asked Mary Grant.

—It comes from εὖ καλύπτω, and means *I cover well* . Care was taken to make the mistake in Greek so that it would be less noticeable, but it is obvious that eucalyptus covers poorly.

—Agreed, my dear Paganel, replied Glenarvan, and now, tell us why the leaves grow like this.

“For a purely physical reason, my friends,” replied Paganel, “which you will easily understand. In this region where the air is dry, where rain is scarce, where the soil is parched, the trees need neither wind nor sun. Without moisture, there is also a lack of sap. Hence these narrow leaves, which seek to defend themselves against the light and to prevent excessive evaporation. That is why they present themselves in profile, and not head-on, to the action of the sun's rays. There is nothing more intelligent than a leaf.”

"And nothing could be more selfish!" replied the major. "They only thought of themselves, and not at all of the travelers."

Everyone was somewhat of Mac Nabbs' opinion, except Paganel, who, while wiping his brow, congratulated himself on walking under shadeless trees.

However, this arrangement of the foliage was regrettable; the crossing of these forests is often very long, and arduous as a result, since nothing protects the traveler from the heat of the day.

All day long, the wagon rolled under these endless rows of eucalyptus trees. Not a single quadruped or native was encountered. A few cockatoos inhabited the treetops; but at that height, they were barely visible, and their chattering turned into an imperceptible murmur.

Sometimes, a flock of parakeets would cross a distant alley and enliven it with a quick, multicolored burst of light.

But, in short, a profound silence reigned in this vast temple of greenery, and only the step of the horses, a few words exchanged in a disjointed conversation, the wheels of the chariot creaking, and, from time to time, a cry from Ayrton exciting his indolent team, disturbed these immense solitudes.

As evening fell, we camped at the foot of eucalyptus trees that bore the marks of a fairly recent fire. They resembled tall factory chimneys, for the flame had hollowed them out internally along their entire length. With only the bark covering remaining, they were not any worse off for it.

However, this unfortunate habit of squatters or natives will eventually destroy these magnificent trees, and they will disappear like those four-hundred-year-old cedars of Lebanon, burned by the clumsy flames of

encampments. Olbinett, following Paganel's advice, lit the supper fire in one of these tubular trunks; he immediately obtained a considerable draft, and the smoke dissipated into the darkened mass of foliage. The necessary precautions were taken for the night, and Ayrton, Mulrady, Wilson, and John Mangles, taking turns, kept watch until sunrise.

Throughout the day of January 3rd, the endless forest multiplied its long, symmetrical avenues.

It seemed as if it would never end. However, towards evening, the rows of trees thinned out, and a few miles away, in a small plain, an agglomeration of regular houses appeared.

"Seymour!" cried Paganel. "That's the last town we have to pass through before leaving the province of Victoria."

"Is it important?" asked Lady Helena.

"Madam," replied Paganel, "it is a simple parish that is becoming a municipality."

"Will we find a suitable hotel there?" said Glenarvan.

"I hope so," replied the geographer.

—Well, let us enter the city, for our valiant travelers will not be displeased, I imagine, to rest there for a night.

"My dear Edward," replied Lady Helena, "Mary and I agree, but on the condition that it will cause neither inconvenience nor delay."

“Not at all,” replied Lord Glenarvan; “our team is tired; besides, tomorrow we will set off again at daybreak.”

It was nine o'clock. The moon was nearing the horizon, casting only slanting rays, lost in the mist. Darkness was gradually falling. The entire group entered the wide streets of Seymour under the leadership of Paganel, who always seemed to know perfectly well what he had never seen before. But his instinct guided him, and he arrived straight at Campbell's North British Hotel.

Horses and oxen were led to the stable, the wagon put away, and the travelers shown to fairly comfortable rooms. At ten o'clock, the guests took their places at a table, which Olbinett had surveyed with the master's eye. Paganel had just been out exploring the town with Robert, and he recounted his nocturnal impressions in a very laconic manner. He had seen absolutely nothing.

However, a less inattentive man would have noticed a certain commotion in the streets of Seymour: groups were forming here and there, gradually growing larger; people were talking at their doorsteps; questions were being asked with genuine anxiety; a few of the day's newspapers were being read aloud, commented on, and discussed. These signs could not have escaped even the least attentive observer. Yet Paganel had suspected nothing.

The major, without going that far, without even leaving the hotel, became aware of the fears that were preoccupying the small town. Ten minutes of conversation with the loquacious Dickson, the hotel manager, and he knew what to expect.

But he didn't breathe a word of it. Only when supper was over, when Lady Glenarvan, Mary, and Robert Grant had returned to their rooms, did the major detain his companions and say to them:

"We know who committed the crime on the Sandhurst railway

.

"And they've been arrested?" Ayrton asked sharply.

"No," replied Mac Nabbs, without seeming to notice the quartermaster's eagerness, an eagerness that was very justified, moreover, in this circumstance.

"Too bad," added Ayrton.

"Well!" asked Glenarvan, "to whom is this crime attributed?"

"Read it," replied the major, showing Glenarvan a copy of the *Australian and New Zealand Gazette* , "and you'll see that the police inspector was right."

Glenarvan read the following passage aloud:

"Sydney, January 2, 1866. —It will be recalled that, on the night of December 29-30 last, an accident occurred at Camden Bridge, five miles beyond Castlemaine station on the Melbourne to Sandhurst railway. The 11:45 night express, traveling at full speed, plunged into the Lutton River. Camden Bridge had remained open as the train crossed."

"Numerous robberies committed after the accident, the 'corpse' of the guard found half a mile from Camden Bridge, proved that this catastrophe was the result of a crime.

"Indeed, according to the coroner's inquest, it appears that this crime must be attributed to the gang of convicts who escaped six months ago from the Perth penitentiary, Western Australia, at the time when they were about to be transferred to Norfolk Island.

"These convicts number twenty-nine; they are commanded by a certain Ben Joyce, a criminal of the most dangerous kind, who arrived in Australia a few months ago, we do not know by what ship, and on whom justice has never been able to lay a hand.

"The inhabitants of the towns, the settlers and squatters of the stations are invited to remain on their guard, and to send to the *surveyor* general all information likely to aid his investigations.

"JP Mitchell, SG"

When Glenarvan had finished reading this article, Mac Nabbs turned to the geographer and said:

"You see, Paganel, that there can be convicts in
Australia.

"Escapees, obviously!" replied Paganel, "but regularly admitted deportees, no. These people have no right to be here."

“Well, they’re here,” Glenarvan continued; “but I don’t suppose their presence will alter our plans or halt our journey. What do you think, John?”

John Mangles did not respond immediately; he hesitated between the pain that abandoning the search would cause the two children and the fear of compromising the expedition.

"If Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant were not with us," he said, "I would care very little for this band of wretches."

Glenarvan understood this and added:

"It goes without saying that we have no intention of abandoning our task; but perhaps it would be prudent, for the sake of our companions, to join the *Duncan* in Melbourne and head east to retrace Harry Grant's steps. What do you think, Mac Nabbs?"

"Before I make a decision," replied the major, "I would like to know Ayrton's opinion."

The quartermaster, directly addressed, looked at Glenarvan.

“I think,” he said, “that we are two hundred miles from Melbourne, and that the danger, if it exists, is as great on the southern route as on the eastern one. Both are little traveled, both are equally dangerous. Besides, I don’t believe that thirty or so criminals can frighten eight well-armed and determined men. So, unless I receive better advice, I would go on.”

“Well said, Ayrton,” replied Paganel. “By continuing on, we can cut off Captain Grant’s trail. By turning south, we will, on the contrary, elude him. I therefore agree with you, and I make light of these escapees from Perth, whom a man of integrity would not take seriously!”

With that, the proposal to leave the travel program unchanged was put to a vote and passed unanimously.

"Just one observation, *my lord* ," said Ayrton as we were about to part.

—Speak, Ayrton.

—Wouldn't it be appropriate to send *Duncan* the order to return to the coast?

“What’s the point?” replied John Mangles. “When we reach Twofold Bay, it will be time to send this order. If some unforeseen event forces us to go to Melbourne, we might regret not finding the *Duncan there* . Besides, its damage is still ongoing. I therefore believe, for these various reasons, that it is better to wait.”

"Good!" replied Ayrton, who did not insist.

The next day, the small group, armed and prepared for any eventuality, left Seymour. Half an hour later, they were back in the eucalyptus forest, which reappeared to the east. Glenarvan would have preferred to travel across open country. A plain is less prone to ambushes and traps than a dense wood. But they had no choice, and the wagon wound its way through the tall, monotonous trees all day long. In the evening, after skirting the northern border of Anglesey County, they crossed the 146th meridian and camped on the boundary of Murray County.

## Chapter XVI *Where the major maintains that they are monkeys*

The following morning, January 5th, the travelers set foot on the vast territory of Murray. This vague and uninhabited district stretches to the high barrier of the Australian Alps. Civilization has not yet divided it into separate counties. It is the little-known and little-frequented portion of the province. Its forests will one day fall beneath the bushman's axe; its grasslands will be surrendered to the squatter's herd; but until now it is virgin soil, as it emerged from the Indian Ocean, it is desert.

All these lands bear a significant name on English maps: "reserve for the blacks." It was there that the indigenous people were brutally driven out by the settlers. They were left, in the remote plains, beneath inaccessible forests, a few designated areas where the Aboriginal race would gradually die out. Any white man—settler, immigrant, squatter, bushman—could cross the boundaries of these reserves. Only a Black person was never allowed to leave them.

Paganel, while riding, addressed the serious issue of indigenous races. There was only one opinion on this matter: that the British system was pushing towards the annihilation of conquered peoples, their erasure from the regions where their ancestors lived. This disastrous trend was evident everywhere, and in Australia more than anywhere else.

In the early days of the colony, the deportees, and the colonists themselves, considered Black people to be wild animals. They hunted them down and killed them with rifles. They massacred them, and the authority of legal experts was invoked to prove that since Australians were outside the law of nature, the murder of these wretches did not constitute a crime. Sydney newspapers even proposed an effective way to get rid of the Hunter Lake tribes:

It was about poisoning them en masse.

The English, as we can see, at the beginning of their conquest, called upon murder to aid colonization.

Their cruelties were atrocious. They behaved in Australia as they did in India, where five million Indians perished; as they did at the Cape, where a population of one million Khoikhoi fell to one hundred thousand. Thus, the Aboriginal population, decimated by mistreatment

and drunkenness, is tending to disappear from the continent before this murderous civilization. Some governors, it is true, have issued decrees against the bloodthirsty Bushmen!

They punished with a few lashes any white man who cut off a black man's nose or ears, or cut off his little finger, "to make a pipe tamper." Empty threats! The murders were organized on a vast scale, and entire tribes disappeared. To cite only Van Diemen Island, which had five hundred thousand natives at the beginning of the century, its inhabitants, by 1863, had been reduced to seven! And recently, the *Mercure newspaper* was able to report the arrival in Hobart Town of the last of the Tasmanians.

Neither Glenarvan, nor the major, nor John Mangles contradicted Paganel. Had they been English, they would not have defended their compatriots. The facts were clear and undeniable.

“Fifty years ago,” added Paganel, “we would have already encountered many tribes of natives on our journey, and so far not a single native has appeared. In a century, this continent will be entirely depopulated of its black race.”

Indeed, the reserve appeared to be completely abandoned. There was no trace of camps or huts.

Plains and thickets followed one another, and little by little the land took on a wild aspect. It even seemed that no living being, man or beast, frequented these remote regions, when Robert, stopping before a clump of eucalyptus trees, exclaimed:

"A monkey! There's a monkey!"

And he showed a large black body which, gliding from branch to branch with surprising agility, passed from one treetop to another, as if some membranous apparatus had sustained it in the air. In this strange land, did monkeys then fly like certain foxes to whom nature has given bat wings?

However, the cart had stopped, and everyone watched the animal as it gradually disappeared into the heights of the eucalyptus tree. Soon, it was seen descending with lightning speed, running across the ground with a thousand contortions and leaps, then grasping the smooth trunk of an enormous gum tree with its long arms. Everyone wondered how it would climb this straight, slippery tree that it couldn't embrace. But the monkey, striking the trunk alternately with a kind of axe, made small notches, and by these regularly spaced points of support, it reached the fork of the gum tree. In a few seconds, it vanished into the thick foliage.

"Ah, what is that monkey?" asked the major.

"That monkey," replied Paganel, "is a purebred Australian!"

The geographer's companions hadn't even had time to shrug their shoulders when cries that could be spelled "coo-eeh! coo-eeh!" rang out from a short distance away. Ayrton spurred his oxen, and, a hundred paces further on, the travelers unexpectedly arrived at a native encampment.

What a sorry sight! A dozen tents stood on the bare ground. These "gunyos," made of strips of bark stacked like roof tiles, offered protection to their wretched inhabitants on only one side. These people, degraded by poverty, were repulsive. There were about thirty of them there—men, women, and children—dressed in *kangaroo skins*

torn to shreds like rags. Their first instinct, as the cart approached, was to flee. But a few words from Ayrton, spoken in an unintelligible dialect, seemed to reassure them. They returned then, half trusting, half fearful, like animals to whom a tasty morsel is offered.

These natives, ranging from five feet four inches to five feet seven inches tall, had a sooty complexion, not black, but the color of old soot, with flaky hair, long arms, prominent abdomens, and hairy bodies scarred by tattoos or incisions made during funeral ceremonies. Nothing was more horrifying than their monstrous faces, their enormous mouths, their flat noses squashed against their cheeks, and their prominent lower jaws armed with white, but sloping, teeth. Never had human beings displayed such a display of animality.

"Robert wasn't wrong," said the major, "they are monkeys—purebred, if you will—but they are monkeys!"

—Mac Nabbs, replied Lady Helena, would you then side with those who hunt them like wild beasts? These poor creatures are men.

"Men!" cried Mac Nabbs. "At best, beings intermediate between man and orangutan! And even then, if I measured their facial angle, I would find it as closed as that of the ape!"

Mac Nabbs was right in this respect; the facial angle of the native Australian is very acute and roughly equal to that of the orangutan, namely sixty to sixty-two degrees. It is therefore not without reason that Mr. De Rienzi proposed classifying these unfortunate people in a separate race which he called the "pithecomorphs," that is to say, men with ape-like forms.

But Lady Helena was even more right than Mac Nabbs, in considering these natives, placed at the lowest rung of the human ladder, to be beings endowed with souls. Between the brute and the Australian lies the unbridgeable abyss that separates the two. Pascal rightly said that man is nowhere a brute.

It is true that he adds, with no less wisdom, "nor angel either."

But Lady Helena and Mary Grant, in fact, refuted this last part of the great thinker's proposition. These two charitable women had left the wagon; they extended a caressing hand to these wretched creatures; they offered them food which these savages devoured with repulsive gluttony. The natives were all the more likely to mistake Lady Helena for a deity, since, according to their religion, white people are formerly black people, whitened after their death.

But it was the women, above all, who aroused the travelers' pity. Nothing compares to the Australian woman's condition; a cruel nature has denied her even the slightest charm; she is a slave, abducted by brute force, who received no other wedding gift than blows from a waddie, a kind of stick riveted to her master's hand. Since that moment, struck by a premature and sudden old age, she has been burdened with all the arduous tasks of a wandering life, carrying, with her children wrapped in rushes, fishing and hunting equipment, and provisions of phormium tenax, from which she makes nets. She must provide for her family; she hunts lizards, opossums, and snakes to the treetops; she chops wood for the hearth; she strips bark from the tent; poor beast of burden, she knows no rest, and only eats the disgusting leftovers that her master no longer wants after she has eaten them.

At the moment, some of these unfortunate creatures, perhaps deprived of food for a long time, were trying to attract birds by presenting them with seeds.

They could be seen lying motionless on the burning ground, as if dead, waiting for hours on end for some naive bird to come within reach of their hand! Their industry in terms of traps did not go any further, and you had to be an Australian bird to fall for them.

However, the natives, tamed by the travelers' advances, surrounded them, and one had to guard against their decidedly plundering instincts. They spoke a hissing idiom, made up of clicking sounds. It resembled animal cries. However, their voices often had endearing, gentle inflections; the word "noki, noki" was frequently repeated, and gestures made it perfectly clear. It was the "Give me! Give me!" that was applied to the travelers' smallest belongings. Mr. Olbinett had a great deal of trouble defending the baggage compartment and especially the expedition's provisions.

These starving wretches cast a terrifying glance at the wagon, displaying sharp teeth that may have been honed on scraps of human flesh. Most Australian tribes are not cannibals, no doubt, in times of peace, but there are few savages who would refuse to devour the flesh of a vanquished enemy.

However, at Helena's request, Glenarvan ordered some food to be distributed. The natives understood his intention and gave demonstrations that would have moved the most hardened heart. They also uttered roars similar to those of wild beasts when the warden

brings them their daily ration. Without agreeing with the major, one could not deny that this race was closely related to animals.

Mr. Olbinett, being a gentleman, had thought it his duty to serve the women first. But these unfortunate creatures dared not eat before their formidable masters. The latter pounced on the biscuit and dried meat as if they were prey.

Mary Grant, thinking that her father was a prisoner of such crude natives, felt tears welling up in her eyes. She imagined all that a man like Harry Grant must suffer, a slave of these wandering tribes, prey to misery, hunger, and mistreatment.

John Mangles, who was observing him with the most anxious attention, guessed the thoughts with which his heart was filled, and he went to anticipate his desires by questioning the quartermaster of the *Britannia* .

"Ayrton," he said to him, "is it from the hands of such savages that you escaped?"

"Yes, Captain," replied Ayrton. "All these inland tribes are alike. Only, you see here only a handful of these poor devils, while on the banks of the Darling there are numerous tribes commanded by chiefs whose authority is formidable."

"But," asked John Mangles, "what can a European do in the midst of these natives?"

"That's what I did myself," replied Ayrton; "he hunts, he fishes with them, he takes part in their fights; as I have already told you, he is

treated according to the services he renders, and if he is an intelligent and brave man, he takes a considerable position in the tribe."

"But he's a prisoner?" said Mary Grant.

—And watched, added Ayrton, so that he cannot take a step, neither day nor night!

"However, you managed to escape, Ayrton," said the major, who joined the conversation.

“Yes, Mr. Mac Nabbs, during a battle between my tribe and a neighboring one. I succeeded. Good. I don’t regret it. But if I had to do it again, I think I would prefer eternal slavery to the tortures I endured crossing the interior deserts. God forbid Captain Grant should ever try such a chance at salvation!”

“Yes, indeed,” replied John Mangles, “we must desire, Miss Mary, that your father be detained among a native tribe. We will find his trail more easily than if he were wandering in the forests of the continent.”

"Are you still hoping?" asked the young girl.

"I still hope, Miss Mary, to see you happy one day, with God's help!"

Only Mary Grant's moist eyes could thank the young captain.

During this conversation, an unusual movement had occurred among the savages; they were shouting loudly; they were running in various directions; they were seizing their weapons and seemed to be seized by a fierce fury.

Glenarvan didn't know where they were going with this, when the major, addressing Ayrton, said to him:

"Since you have lived among Australians for a long time, you probably understand their language?"

“More or less,” replied the quartermaster, “for as many tribes as there are languages. However, I suspect that, out of gratitude, these savages wish to demonstrate their honor by staging a mock battle.”

This was indeed the cause of the commotion. The natives, without further ado, attacked each other with perfectly feigned fury, so much so that, unless one had been forewarned, one would have taken this little war seriously. But the Australians are excellent mimes, according to travelers, and on this occasion, they displayed remarkable talent.

Their weapons of attack and defense consisted of a bludgeon, a kind of wooden club capable of splitting even the thickest skulls, and a type of tomahawk, a very hard, sharpened stone held between two sticks by adhesive gum. This axe has a ten-foot-long handle. It is a formidable instrument of war and a useful instrument of peace, used to fell branches or heads, to cut bodies or trees, as the case may be.

All these weapons waved in frantic hands amidst shouts and cries; the combatants threw themselves upon one another; some fell as if dead, others uttered the cry of victory. The women, especially the older ones, possessed by the demon of war, incited them to fight, rushed upon the mock corpses, and mutilated them with a ferocity that, in reality, could not have been more horrific. At every moment, Lady Helena feared that the game would degenerate into a serious battle. Moreover, the children, who had taken part in the fight, were going all out. The little

boys and girls, especially the most enraged, were giving each other superb slaps with ferocious enthusiasm.

This mock battle had already lasted ten minutes when suddenly the combatants stopped. The weapons fell from their hands. A profound silence followed the noisy tumult. The natives remained motionless in their final poses, like figures in a living painting.

They looked as if they were petrified.

What was the cause of this change, and why this sudden, marble-like immobility? It wasn't long before they found out.

A flock of cockatoos was just now spreading out near the gum trees. They filled the air with their calls and, with the vibrant hues of their plumage, resembled a flying rainbow. It was the appearance of this dazzling cloud of birds that had interrupted the fighting. Hunting, more useful than war, would now take its place.

One of the natives, seizing a red-painted instrument of a particular structure, left his still motionless companions and headed between the trees and bushes towards the flock of cockatoos.

It made no noise as it crawled, it didn't brush against a leaf, it didn't move a pebble.

It was a shadow that was gliding by.

The savage, having reached a suitable distance, launched his weapon along a horizontal line two feet from the ground. This weapon thus traveled a space of about forty feet; then, suddenly, without touching the ground, it rose abruptly at a right angle, ascended one hundred feet

into the air, fatally struck a dozen birds, and, describing a parabola, returned to fall at the hunter's feet.

Glenarvan and his companions were stunned; they could not believe their eyes.

"It's the 'boomerang!' said Ayrton.

"The boomerang!" cried Paganel, "the Australian boomerang."

And, like a child, he went to pick up the marvelous instrument, "to see what was inside."

One might have thought, in fact, that an internal mechanism, a suddenly released spring, was altering its travel. This was not the case.

This boomerang consisted simply of a single piece of hard, curved wood, thirty to forty inches long. Its thickness in the middle was about three inches, and both ends terminated in sharp points. Its concave side was inward-angled by six lines, and its convex side had two very sharp edges. It was as simple as it was incomprehensible.

"So this is the famous boomerang!" said Paganel after carefully examining the bizarre instrument.

A piece of wood and nothing more. Why, at a certain point in its horizontal trajectory, does it rise back into the air to return to the hand that threw it?

Scholars and travelers have never been able to explain this phenomenon.

—Wouldn't that be a similar effect to that of a hoop which, thrown in a certain way, returns to its starting point? said John Mangles.

—Or rather, added Glenarvan, a retrograde effect, like that of a billiard ball struck at a specific point?

—Not at all, replied Paganel; in both cases, there is a point of support which determines the reaction:

The ground is for the hoop, and the mat for the marble. But here, there is no point of support, the instrument does not touch the ground, and yet it rises to a considerable height!

"So how do you explain this fact, Mr. Paganel?" asked Lady Helena.

"I can't explain it, madam, I'm simply observing it once again; the effect is obviously due to the way the boomerang is thrown and its particular shape. But as for that throwing technique, that remains the Australians' secret."

"In any case, it's quite ingenious... for monkeys," added Lady Helena, looking at the major who shook his head unconvincingly.

However, time was passing, and Glenarvan thought he should not delay his march eastward any longer; he was about to ask the travelers to get back into their wagon, when a savage came running up and spoke a few words with great animation.

"Ah!" said Ayrton, "they've spotted some cassowaries!"

"What! Is this a hunt?" said Glenarvan.

"We must see this," exclaimed Paganel. "It must be curious! Perhaps the boomerang will still work."

—What do you think, Ayrton?

"It won't be long, *my lord* ," replied the quartermaster.

The natives hadn't wasted a moment. Killing cassowaries was a stroke of luck for them. The tribe's provisions were secured for a few days. So the hunters used all their skill to seize such prey. But how, without guns, did they manage to bring down, and without dogs, to hit such an agile animal? This was the most interesting aspect of the spectacle that Paganel had requested.

The emu, or helmeted cassowary, called "moureuk" by the natives, is an animal that is becoming increasingly rare on the Australian plains. This large bird, standing two and a half feet tall, has white flesh that closely resembles that of a turkey; it has a horny plate on its head; its eyes are light brown, its beak black and curved downwards; its toes are armed with powerful claws; its wings, veritable stumps, are useless for flight; its plumage, or rather its fur, is darker on its neck and breast. But, though it cannot fly, it runs and would challenge the fastest horse on the turf. It can therefore only be caught by cunning, and even then, one must be exceptionally cunning.

Therefore, at the native's call, about ten Australians deployed like a detachment of riflemen. They were in a magnificent plain, where indigo grew naturally and its flowers turned the ground blue. The travelers stopped at the edge of a mimosa grove.

As the natives approached, half a dozen of the emus rose, fled, and took cover a mile away. When the tribe's hunter recognized their position, he signaled his companions to halt. They lay down on the ground, while he, pulling two skillfully sewn cassowary skins from his net, immediately donned them.

His right arm passed over his head, and he mimicked, by moving his arms, the gait of a muskrat searching for food.

The native approached the flock; sometimes he paused, pretending to peck at a few seeds; sometimes he kicked up dust with his feet and surrounded himself with a cloud of powder. The whole charade was perfect. Nothing could be more faithful than this imitation of the emu's movements. The hunter uttered deep grunts that even the bird itself would have been fooled by. And so it happened. The savage soon found himself in the middle of the unsuspecting flock. Suddenly, his arm raised the club, and five out of six elves fell beside him.

The hunter had succeeded; the hunt was over.

Then Glenarvan, the travelers, and the whole little group took their leave of the natives. The latter showed little regret at this separation. Perhaps the success of the cassowary hunt made them forget their satisfied hunger. They lacked even the gratitude of the stomach, more vivid than that of the heart, in uncultured and brutish natures.

In any case, on certain occasions one could not help but admire their intelligence and skill.

## Chapter XVII *The Millionaire Farmers*

After a peaceful night spent at 146°15' longitude, the travelers continued their journey across the vast district at seven o'clock in the morning on January 6th. They walked ever onward toward the rising sun, and their footprints traced a perfectly straight line across the plain. Twice they crossed the tracks of squatters heading north, and at that point, these various prints would have merged, had Glenarvan's horse not left the mark of Black Point in the dust, recognizable by its two trefoils.

The plain was sometimes crisscrossed by capricious creeks, surrounded by boxwood, with waters that were more temporary than permanent. They originated on the slopes of the "Buffalo Ranges," a chain of mediocre mountains whose picturesque line undulated on the horizon.

They decided to camp there that very evening. Ayrton urged his team on, and after a day's journey of thirty-five miles, the oxen arrived, a little tired. The tent was pitched under some large trees; night had fallen, and supper was quickly eaten. After such a trek, they were thinking less about eating than about sleeping.

Paganel, who was assigned the first watch, did not go to bed, and, with his rifle on his shoulder, he watched over the camp, walking back and forth to better resist sleep.

Despite the absence of the moon, the night was almost luminous under the glow of the southern constellations.

The scholar amused himself by reading in this great book of the firmament, ever open and so interesting to those who know how to

understand it. The profound silence of sleeping nature was broken only by the sound of shackles rattling at the horses' hooves.

Paganel was thus carried away by his astronomical meditations, and he was more concerned with things of the sky than things of the earth, when a distant sound drew him from his reverie.

He listened attentively, and, to his great astonishment, he thought he recognized the sounds of a piano; a few chords, largely arpeggiated, sent their shimmering sound to him.

He couldn't be mistaken.

"A piano in the desert!" Paganel thought. "That's something I'll never accept."

It was very surprising indeed, and Paganel preferred to believe that some strange Australian bird was imitating the sounds of a Pleyel or an Érard, just as others imitate the sounds of a clock and a knife grinder.

But at that moment, a purely resonant voice rose into the air. The pianist was also a singer. Paganel listened, unwilling to surrender.

However, after a few moments, he was forced to recognize the sublime melody that reached his ear.

It was *il mio tesoro tanto* , from *Don Juan* .

"Good heavens!" thought the geographer, "however bizarre Australian birds may be, even if they were the most musical parrots in the world, they can't sing Mozart!"

Then he listened to the end of this sublime inspiration from the master. The effect of this sweet melody, carried through a clear night, was indescribable.

Paganel remained for a long time under this inexpressible spell; then the voice fell silent, and all returned to silence.

When Wilson came to relieve Paganel, he found him deep in thought. Paganel said nothing to the sailor; he reserved the matter for informing Glenarvan of this peculiarity the next day, and went to huddle in the tent.

The next day, the whole troop was awakened by unexpected barking. Glenarvan got up immediately.

Two magnificent, tall pointers, admirable specimens of the English pointing breed, were frolicking on the edge of a small wood. As the travelers approached, they went back under the trees, redoubling their cries.

"So there's a station in this desert," said Glenarvan, "and hunters, since these are hunting dogs?"

Paganel was already opening his mouth to recount his impressions of the previous night when two young men appeared, riding two beautiful thoroughbred horses, true "hunters".

The two gentlemen, dressed in elegant hunting attire, stopped at the sight of the small group camped in the gypsy style. They seemed to wonder what the presence of armed men in this place meant, when they saw the female travelers getting out of the carriage. Immediately, they dismounted and approached them, hat in hand.

Lord Glenarvan came to meet them, and, in his capacity as a foreigner, he stated his name and title.

The young men bowed, and one of them, the oldest, said: " *My lord* , these ladies, you and your companions, will you do us the honor of resting in our dwelling?

—Gentlemen?... said Glenarvan.

—Michel and Sandy Patterson, owners of Hottam-Station. You are already on the property and you don't have a quarter of a mile to go.

"Gentlemen," replied Glenarvan, "I would not wish to abuse such graciously offered hospitality…"

“ *My lord* ,” replied Michel Patterson, “by accepting, you are obligating poor exiles who will be only too happy to do you the honors of the desert.”

Glenarvan bowed in acknowledgment.

"Sir," said Paganel then, addressing Michel Patterson, "would I be indiscreet in asking if it was you who sang that tune by the divine Mozart yesterday?

"It was me, sir," replied the gentleman, "and my cousin Sandy was with me."

"Well then, sir," Paganel replied, "accept the sincere compliments of a Frenchman, a passionate admirer of this music."

Paganel extended his hand to the young gentleman, who took it with a very friendly air. Then, Michel Patterson indicated the road to the right.

The horses had been left in the care of Ayrton and the sailors.

So it was on foot, chatting and admiring, that the travelers, guided by the two young men, went to the Hottam-Station residence.

It was truly a magnificent establishment, run with the rigorous severity of English parks.

Vast meadows, enclosed by grey fences, stretched as far as the eye could see. There, thousands of oxen grazed, and millions of sheep. Numerous shepherds and even more dogs guarded this boisterous army. The bellowing and bleating mingled with the barking of mastiffs and the shrill clatter of *stockwhipps* .

To the east, the gaze rested on a border of *myalls* and gum trees, dominated at seven thousand five hundred feet in the air by the imposing peak of Mount Hottam.

Long avenues of evergreen trees radiated in all directions.

Here and there, thickets of grass trees, ten-foot-high shrubs resembling dwarf palms, grew, their leaves long and narrow, hidden in a profusion of growth. The air was fragrant with the scent of bay laurel, whose clusters of white flowers, then in full bloom, released the most delicate aromatic aromas.

The charming groups of these native trees were joined by transplanted varieties from European climates. The peach, pear, apple, fig, orange, and even the oak itself were greeted with cheers from the travelers, and the latter, if they were not too surprised to walk in the shade of the trees of their own country, were at least amazed at the sight of the birds that fluttered between the branches, the "satin-birds"

with their silky plumage, and the sericulas, dressed half in gold and half in black velvet.

Among other things, and for the first time, they were given the opportunity to admire the "menure," the lyrebird, whose tail resembles the graceful instrument of Orpheus. It flitted among the tree ferns, and when its tail struck the branches, one was almost surprised not to hear those harmonious chords that inspired Amphion to rebuild the walls of Thebes. Paganel longed to play it.

However, Lord Glenarvan was not content merely to admire the enchanting wonders of this impromptu oasis in the Australian desert. He listened to the young gentlemen's tale. In England, amidst its civilized countryside, the newcomer would have first informed his host of his origins and destination. But here, with a subtle touch of tact, Michael and Sandy Patterson felt obliged to introduce themselves to the travelers to whom they were offering hospitality. And so they recounted their story.

It was the sentiment of all those intelligent and industrious young Englishmen who didn't believe that wealth excused them from working. Michael and Sandy Patterson were the sons of a London banker. At twenty, the head of their family had said, "Here are millions, young men. Go to some distant colony; establish a useful enterprise there; acquire life's wisdom through work. If you succeed, so much the better. If you fail, it doesn't matter. We won't regret the millions that will have helped you become men." The two young men obeyed. They chose the Australian colony of Victoria to plant their father's *banknotes* , and they had no reason to regret it. After three years, the enterprise was thriving.

In the provinces of Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia, there are over three thousand settlements, some run by squatters who raise cattle, others by *settlers* whose main industry is farming. Until the arrival of the two young Englishmen, the largest settlement of this kind was that of Mr. Jamieson, which covered one hundred square kilometers, with a twenty-five-kilometer border on the Paroo, a tributary of the Darling.

Now, Hottam's station surpassed it in size and business. The two young men were squatters and *settlers* all at once. They managed their immense property with rare skill, and, what is more difficult, with uncommon energy.

As we can see, this station was located a great distance from the main towns, in the middle of the sparsely populated Murray desert. It occupied the area between 146°48' and 147°, that is to say, a piece of land five leagues long and wide, situated between the Buffalo Ranges and Mount Hottam. At the two northern corners of this vast quadrilateral rose Mount Aberdeen on the left and the peaks of the High Barven on the right. Beautiful, meandering waters were plentiful, thanks to the creeks and tributaries of the Oven's River, which flows north into the Murray. Consequently, cattle breeding and farming were equally successful there. Ten thousand acres of land, admirably cultivated and managed, blended native crops with exotic produce, while several million animals fattened themselves in the verdant pastures. As a result, Hottam-Station products were trading at high prices on the Castlemaine and Melbourne markets.

Michel and Sandy Patterson were finishing giving these details of their industrious existence when, at the end of an avenue of casuarinas,

the dwelling appeared.

It was a charming house of wood and brick, nestled beneath clumps of emerophila. It had the elegant shape of a chalet, and a veranda, from which hung Chinese lamps, curved along the walls like an ancient impluvium. Before the windows unfurled multicolored awnings that seemed to be in bloom. Nothing could be more charming, nothing more delightful to the eye, but also nothing more comfortable. On the lawns and in the surrounding flowerbeds grew bronze candelabras, supporting elegant lanterns; at nightfall, the whole park was illuminated by the white light of gas, emanating from a small gasometer hidden beneath arbors of *myalls* and tree ferns.

Moreover, there were no outbuildings, stables, or sheds to be seen—nothing to indicate a farm. All these outbuildings—a veritable village composed of more than twenty huts and houses—were located a quarter of a mile away, at the bottom of a small valley. Electric wires provided instant communication between the village and the owners' house. The latter, far from any noise, seemed lost in a forest of exotic trees.

Soon, the avenue of casuarinas was passed. A small iron bridge of extreme elegance, thrown over a murmuring creek, gave access to the private park.

It was crossed. A high-ranking steward came to meet the travelers; the doors of the dwelling opened, and the guests of Hottam-Station entered the sumptuous apartments contained under this envelope of bricks and flowers.

All the luxuries of artistic and fashionable life were laid out before their eyes. From the anteroom, adorned with decorative motifs borrowed from the world of horse racing and hunting, opened a vast drawing room with five windows. There, a piano covered with old and new musical scores, easels bearing unfinished canvases, pedestals adorned with marble statues, several paintings by Flemish masters hanging on the walls, rich carpets as soft underfoot as thick grass, sections of tapestry enlivened with graceful mythological scenes, an antique chandelier suspended from the ceiling, precious earthenware, valuable knick-knacks of impeccable taste, a thousand precious and delicate trifles that one was astonished to see in an Australian dwelling, all demonstrated a supreme harmony of art and comfort. Everything that could charm away the boredom of self-imposed exile, everything that could evoke memories of European customs, furnished this enchanting drawing room. It felt like we were in some castle in France or England.

The five windows let in, filtered through the thin awnings, a soft, filtered light, already softened by the dimness of the veranda. As Lady Helena approached, she was filled with wonder. The house on this side overlooked a wide valley that stretched to the foot of the eastern mountains. The succession of meadows and woods, the occasional vast clearings, the gracefully rounded hills, the undulating terrain—all these elements created a spectacle beyond description.

No other country in the world could be compared to it, not even that renowned paradise valley on the Norwegian border of Telemarck.

This vast panorama, divided by large patches of shadow and light, changed every hour according to the whims of the sun. The imagination

could dream of nothing beyond it, and this enchanting aspect satisfied every appetite of the eye.

However, on Sandy Patterson's orders, a luncheon had just been hastily arranged by the station's head waiter, and less than fifteen minutes after their arrival, the travelers sat down at a sumptuously set table. The quality of the food and wine was undeniable; but what was most pleasing amidst these refinements of opulence was the joy of the two young squatters, happy to offer such splendid hospitality under their roof.

Moreover, they soon learned the purpose of the expedition, and they took a keen interest in Glenarvan's research. They also gave the captain's children good hope.

“Harry Grant,” said Michel, “obviously fell into the hands of the natives, since he did not reappear in the coastal settlements. He knew his exact position, the document proves it, and in order not to have reached some English colony, he must have been taken prisoner by the savages the moment he landed.”

"That's precisely what happened to his quartermaster Ayrton," replied John Mangles.

"But you gentlemen," asked Lady Helena, "have you never heard of the *Britannia disaster* ?"

"Never, madam," replied Michel.

—And what treatment, in your opinion, did Captain Grant, a prisoner of the Australians, undergo?

“Australians are not cruel, madam,” replied the young squatter, “and Miss Grant can rest assured on that point. There are frequent examples of their gentle nature, and some Europeans have lived among them for a long time without ever having cause to complain of their brutality.”

—King among others, said Paganel, the only survivor of Burke's expedition.

"Not only this daring explorer," Sandy continued, "but also an English soldier named Buckley, who, having escaped in 1803 on the coast of Port Philip, was taken in by the natives and lived with them for thirty-three years."

—And since that time, added Michel Patterson, one of the latest issues of the *Australasian* informs us that a certain Morrill has just been returned to his compatriots, after sixteen years of slavery.

The captain's story must be his own, for it was precisely following the shipwreck of the *Peruvian* in 1846 that he was taken prisoner by the natives and brought inland. Therefore, I believe you must retain all hope.

These words brought immense joy to the young squatter's listeners. They corroborated the information already provided by Paganel and Ayrton.

Then, after the female travelers had left the table, the conversation turned to the convicts. The squatters knew about the Camden Bridge disaster, but the presence of a band of escapees didn't worry them at all. It wasn't a station with a staff of over a hundred men that these criminals would dare attack. Besides, it was assumed they wouldn't venture into the Murray desert, where they had no business being, nor into the New South Wales colonies, whose roads were heavily guarded. Ayrton shared this opinion.

Lord Glenarvan could not refuse his kind hosts the opportunity to spend the entire day at Hottam Station. Twelve hours of delay became twelve hours of rest; the horses and oxen could only recover advantageously in the comfortable stables of the station.

So it was agreed, and the two young people submitted to their hosts a program for the day which was eagerly adopted.

At noon, seven vigorous hunters were pawing the ground at the gates of the house. An elegant carriage intended for the ladies, driven with long reins, allowed its driver to demonstrate his skill in the intricate maneuvers of the four-in-hand. The riders, preceded by huntsmen and armed with excellent bolt-action shotguns, mounted and galloped to the gates, while the pack of pointers barked merrily through the undergrowth.

For four hours, the cavalcade wound its way through the paths and avenues of this park, which was as large as a small German state. The Reuss-Schleitz or Saxe-Coburg-Gotha families could have fit entirely within its walls.

While the population was smaller, sheep were plentiful. As for game, an army of beaters couldn't have sent more to the hunters' guns. Soon, a series of gunshots rang out, disturbing the peaceful inhabitants of the woods and plains. Young Robert distinguished himself alongside Major Mac Nabbs. This bold lad, despite his sister's warnings, was always in the lead and the first to the firing line.

But John Mangles took it upon himself to look after him, and Mary Grant was reassured.

During this hunt, some animals peculiar to the country were killed, and of which until then Paganel only knew the name: among others, the "wombat" and the "bandicoot".

The wombat is a herbivore that digs burrows in the manner of badgers; it is as big as a sheep, and its meat is excellent.

The bandicoot is a species of marsupial that could teach the European fox a thing or two and give it lessons in raiding farmyards. This rather repulsive-looking animal, a foot and a half long, fell victim to Paganel, who, out of hunter's pride, found it charming.

"An adorable creature," he said.

Robert, among other important feats, very skillfully killed a "raccoon fox," a kind of small fox whose black fur speckled with white is worth

that of the marten, and a pair of opossums that were hiding in the thick foliage of the large trees.

But of all these exploits, the most interesting was undoubtedly a *kangaroo hunt* . Around four o'clock, the dogs flushed out a group of these curious marsupials. The joeys hurried back into their mothers' pouches, and the whole group scattered in a line. Nothing is more astonishing than the enormous leaps of the *kangaroo* , whose hind legs, twice as long as its front legs, extend like a spring. At the head of the fleeing group was a five-foot-tall male, a magnificent specimen of the "macropus giganteus," an "old man," as the Bushmen say.

For four or five miles, the hunt was vigorously pursued. The *kangaroos* showed no signs of tiring, and the dogs, who feared, not without reason, their powerful paw armed with a sharp claw, didn't dare approach them. But finally, exhausted by their run, the pack stopped, and the "old man" leaned against a tree trunk, ready to defend himself. One of the pointers, carried away by its momentum, rolled close to him. A moment later, the unfortunate dog leaped into the air and fell back, disemboweled. Certainly, the entire pack wouldn't have been enough to overcome these powerful marsupials. It was therefore necessary to finish them off with gunfire, and only bullets could bring down the gigantic animal.

At that moment, Robert almost fell victim to his recklessness. In order to ensure his shot, he approached the *kangaroo so closely* that it leaped away.

Robert fell, a scream rang out. Mary Grant, from the top of the station wagon, terrified, speechless, almost without looking, stretched out her

hands towards her brother. No hunter dared shoot the animal, for it could also strike the child.

But suddenly John Mangles, his hunting knife open, rushed at the *kangaroo* , risking being disemboweled, and struck the animal in the heart. The beast felled, Robert got up unharmed. A moment later, he was in his sister's arms.

"Thank you, Mr. John! Thank you!" said Mary Grant, extending her hand to the young captain.

"I was responsible for him," said John Mangles, taking the girl's trembling hand.

This incident brought the hunt to an end. The herd of marsupials had scattered after the death of their leader, whose remains were brought back to the plantation. It was then six o'clock in the evening. A magnificent dinner awaited the hunters. Among other dishes, a *kangaroo tail broth* , prepared in the native style, was the highlight of the meal.

After the ice cream and sorbet dessert, the guests moved to the living room. The evening was devoted to music. Lady Helena, a very good pianist, shared her talents with the squatters. Michel and Sandy Patterson sang passages from the latest scores of Gounod, Victor Massé, Félicien David, and even that misunderstood genius, Richard Wagner, with impeccable taste.

At eleven o'clock, tea was served; it was made with that English perfection which no other people can equal. But when Paganel asked to taste Australian tea, he was brought a liquid as black as ink, a liter of

water in which half a pound of tea had boiled for four hours. Paganel, despite his grimaces, declared this beverage excellent.

At midnight, the guests of the resort, led to cool and comfortable rooms, prolonged the pleasures of this day in their dreams.

The next day, at dawn, they took their leave of the two young squatters. There were many thanks and promises to meet again in Europe, at Malcolm's castle. Then the wagon started up, rounded the base of Mount Hottam, and soon the dwelling disappeared, like a fleeting vision, from the travelers' eyes. For another five miles, their horses trod the station's ground.

At only nine o'clock, the last palisade was crossed, and the small troop plunged into the almost unknown lands of the Victorian province.

## Chapter XVIII *The Australian Alps*

A huge barrier blocked the road in the southeast.

It was the Australian Alps, a vast fortification whose capricious curtain walls extend for a length of fifteen hundred miles, and stop the clouds four thousand feet in the air.

The overcast sky allowed only a filtered warmth to reach the ground, held in check by the dense mist. The temperature was therefore bearable, but the journey was difficult on the already very rugged terrain. The rises of the plain became increasingly pronounced. A few hillocks, planted with young green gum trees, swelled here and there. Further on, these sharply defined humps formed the first steps of the high Alps. A continuous climb was necessary, and this was evident in

the effort of the oxen whose yokes creaked under the pull of the heavy cart; they snorted loudly, and the muscles in their hocks strained, threatening to break. The planks of the vehicle groaned at the unexpected jolts that Ayrton, skillful as he was, could not avoid. The women travelers cheerfully accepted this.

John Mangles and his two sailors were pounding the pavement a few hundred paces ahead; they were choosing the passable passages, not to say the channels, for all these rises in the ground represented so many obstacles between which the wagon chose the best route. It was a true navigation through these treacherous terrains.

A difficult task, often perilous. Many times, Wilson's axe had to cut a path through thickets of shrubs. The damp, clay soil gave way beneath his feet. The route lengthened with the countless detours forced upon them by insurmountable obstacles: high granite boulders, deep ravines, and suspicious-looking lagoons. Thus, by evening, they had barely climbed half a degree. They camped at the foot of the Alps, on the banks of Cobongra Creek, at the edge of a small plain covered with shrubs four feet high, whose bright red leaves were a welcome sight.

"We'll have trouble getting through," said Glenarvan, looking at the mountain range whose silhouette was already blending into the evening darkness. "The Alps!
Now that's a name that gives you pause."

“You must lower your expectations, my dear Glenarvan,” Paganel replied. “Don’t imagine you have an entire Switzerland to cross. Australia has its own Grampians, Pyrenees, Alps, and Blue Mountains, just like in Europe and America, but in miniature. This simply proves

that geographers' imaginations are not boundless, or that their vocabulary for proper names is quite limited."

"So, these Australian Alps?" asked Lady Helena.

"They are pocket mountains," replied Paganel.

We will cross them without even noticing.

"Speak for yourself!" said the major. "Only a distracted man could cross a mountain range without realizing it."

"Distracted!" cried Paganel. "But I am no longer distracted. I defer to these ladies. Since I set foot on the continent, have I not kept my promise? Have I committed a single indiscretion? Is there any error to reproach me for?"

"None, Mr. Paganel," said Mary Grant. "You are now the most perfect of men."

"Too perfect!" added Lady Helena, laughing. "Your distractions suited you well."

"Isn't that true, madam?" replied Paganel. "If I lose all my faults, I'll become just like everyone else. So I hope that before long I'll make some good blunder that you'll laugh at. You see, when I don't make a mistake, it seems to me that I'm failing in my calling."

The following day, January 9th, despite the assurances of the confident geographer, the small group embarked on the crossing of the Alps with great difficulty. They had to venture forth, plunging into narrow, deep gorges that could easily end in dead ends.

Ayrton would no doubt have been very embarrassed if, after an hour's walk, an inn, a miserable "tap", had not unexpectedly appeared on one of the mountain paths.

"Good heavens!" cried Paganel, "the master of this tavern cannot make his fortune in such a place! What good can he do?"

"To give us the information we need along our way," replied Glenarvan. "Let's go in."

Glenarvan, followed by Ayrton, crossed the threshold of the inn. The proprietor of *Bush Inn* —as his sign proclaimed—was a coarse man with a forbidding face, who must have considered himself his own main customer when it came to the gin, brandy, and whiskey in his tavern. He usually saw little more than traveling squatters or the occasional herder.

He answered the questions put to him with a sour expression. But his answers were enough to keep Ayrton on his path. Glenarvan acknowledged the trouble the innkeeper had gone to with a few crowns, and was about to leave the tavern when a sign stuck to the wall caught his eye.

It was a notice from the colonial police. It reported the escape of the convicts from Perth and offered a reward for Ben Joyce's head: one hundred pounds sterling to whoever delivered him.

"He's definitely a miserable wretch," Glenarvan said to the quartermaster.

"And especially to take!" replied Ayrton. "One hundred pounds!"

But that's a lot of money! He's not worth it.

—As for the tavern keeper, added Glenarvan, he doesn't reassure me much, despite his sign.

"Neither do I," replied Ayrton.

Glenarvan and the quartermaster rejoined the wagon. They headed towards the point where the road to Lucknow ends. There, a narrow pass wound its way diagonally across the chain. They began to climb.

It was a difficult climb. More than once, the travelers and their companions had to dismount. They had to help the heavy vehicle and push the wheel, hold it back often on perilous slopes, unharness the oxen whose team could not develop usefully at sharp turns, stabilize the cart which threatened to roll back, and, more than once, Ayrton had to call for help from the horses already tired of hauling themselves up.

Whether it was this prolonged fatigue, or some other cause, one of the horses succumbed during that day.

It collapsed suddenly without any warning signs. It was Mulrady's horse, and when Mulrady tried to help it up, he found it dead.

Ayrton came to examine the animal lying on the ground, and seemed to understand nothing about this instant death.

"This beast must have ruptured some vessel," said Glenarvan.

"Obviously," replied Ayrton.

"Take my horse, Mulrady," added Glenarvan, "I will join Lady Helena in the carriage."

Mulrady obeyed, and the small group continued their tiring climb, after abandoning the animal's carcass to the crows.

The Australian Alps range is not very thick, and its base does not extend over a width of eight miles.

So, if the route chosen by Ayrton led to the eastern slope, it would be possible, forty-eight hours later, to have crossed that high barrier. Then, insurmountable obstacles and a difficult route would no longer be a problem all the way to the sea.

During the day of the 10th, the travelers reached the highest point of the pass, about two thousand feet. They found themselves on an open plateau that offered a sweeping view. To the north shimmered the tranquil waters of Lake Omeo, dotted with waterfowl, and beyond, the vast plains of Murray. To the south stretched the verdant expanses of Gippsland, its gold-rich fields, its tall forests, with the appearance of a primeval land. There, nature still reigned supreme over its produce, the course of its waters, its great trees untouched by the axe, and the squatters, few until then, dared not challenge her. It seemed as if this chain of Alps separated two distinct regions, one of which had retained its wildness. The sun was setting then, and a few rays, piercing the reddened clouds, revived the hues of the Murray district. On the contrary, the Gippsland, sheltered behind the screen of the mountains, was lost in a vague darkness, and it seemed as if the shadow plunged this entire transalpine region into an early night.

This contrast was keenly felt by spectators placed between these two very distinct countries, and a certain emotion seized them at seeing this

almost unknown land that they were about to cross to the Victorian borders.

They camped on the plateau itself, and the next day the descent began. It was quite rapid. A hailstorm of extreme violence assailed the travelers, forcing them to seek shelter under rocks. These were not hailstones, but veritable slabs of ice, as wide as a hand, hurled down from the storm clouds. A slingshot could not have launched them with more force, and a few nasty bruises taught Paganel and Robert that they had to dodge their blows. The wagon was riddled in many places, and few roofs would have withstood the onslaught of these sharp icicles, some of which became embedded in the trunks of trees.

They had to wait for the end of this prodigious downpour, under penalty of being stoned. This took about an hour, and the troop once again set out on the sloping rocks, still slippery from the hail runoff.

Towards evening, the wagon, jolted about and its frame badly disjointed, but still sturdy on its wooden wheels, descended the last stretches of the Alps, between tall, isolated fir trees. The pass led to the plains of Gippsland. The Alpine chain had just been successfully crossed, and the usual preparations were made for the evening's camp.

On the 12th, at dawn, the journey resumed with undiminished enthusiasm. Everyone was eager to reach their destination: the Pacific Ocean, the very spot where the *Britannia was wrecked* . Only there could the traces of the shipwrecked sailors be usefully found, and not in the desolate Gippsland region. Ayrton urged Lord Glenarvan to send *Duncan* orders to proceed to the coast, so that all search resources would be readily available. He believed they should take advantage of

the route from Lucknow to Melbourne. Later, it would be difficult, as direct communication with the capital would be completely impossible.

These recommendations from the quartermaster seemed worth following. Paganel advised taking them into account. He also thought that the presence of the yacht would be very useful in such circumstances, and he added that communication with Melbourne would be impossible once the Lucknow route was passed.

Glenarvan was undecided, and perhaps he would have dispatched the orders that Ayrton so particularly demanded, had the major not so vigorously opposed this decision. He demonstrated that Ayrton's presence was necessary for the expedition, that he would be familiar with the land as they approached the coast, that if chance led the caravan onto Harry Grant's trail, the quartermaster would be better equipped than anyone else to follow it, and finally, that only he could indicate the place where the *Britannia had been lost* .

Mac Nabbs therefore opted to continue the voyage without altering his plan. He found an ally in John Mangles, who agreed with him. The young captain even pointed out that orders from his office would reach the *Duncan more easily* if sent from Twofold Bay than through a messenger forced to travel two hundred miles across wild country. This course of action prevailed. It was decided that they would wait until their arrival at Twofold Bay before taking any action. The major observed Ayrton, who seemed rather disappointed. But he said nothing, and, as was his custom, kept his observations to himself.

The plains stretching at the foot of the Australian Alps were level, sloping gently eastward. Large clumps of mimosa and eucalyptus, and

gum trees of various species, broke the monotonous uniformity here and there. Gastrolobium grandiflorum bristled the ground with its brightly flowering shrubs. A few insignificant creeks, mere streams choked with small rushes and overgrown with orchids, frequently crossed the road. They were forded. In the distance, flocks of bustards and cassowaries fled as the travelers approached. Above the shrubs, *kangaroos leaped and bounded* like a troupe of elastic puppets. But the hunters of the expedition had little thought of hunting, and their horses needed no further exertion.

Moreover, a heavy heat hung over the land. A violent electricity saturated the atmosphere. Beasts and people alike were subject to its influence. They moved forward without seeking anything more. The silence was broken only by Ayrton's shouts urging on his weary team.

From noon until two o'clock, we crossed a curious forest of ferns that would have aroused the admiration of less weary people. These tree-like plants, in full bloom, measured up to thirty feet in height. Horses and riders passed easily beneath their drooping branches, and sometimes the rowel of a spur rang out as it struck their woody stems.

Beneath those motionless parasols reigned a coolness that no one thought to complain about. Jacques Paganel, ever demonstrative, let out a few sighs of satisfaction that set flocks of parakeets and cockatoos alight. It was a concert of deafening chatter.

The geographer continued his shouts and jubilation with renewed vigor when his companions suddenly saw him stagger on his horse and collapse like a sack of potatoes. Was it dizziness, or worse, suffocation caused by the high temperature? They rushed to his aid.

"Paganel! Paganel! What's wrong with you!" cried Glenarvan.

"I, my dear friend, no longer have a horse," replied Paganel, freeing himself from his stirrups.

—What! Your horse?

"Dead, struck down, like Mulrady's!"

Glenarvan, John Mangles, and Wilson examined the animal. Paganel was right. His horse had just been suddenly struck.

"That's peculiar," said John Mangles.

"Very peculiar indeed," murmured the major.

Glenarvan was understandably worried about this new accident. He couldn't recover in this desert.

However, if an epidemic were to strike the expedition's horses, he would be in a very difficult position to continue his journey.

Before the day was out, the word "epidemic" seemed to be justified. A third horse, Wilson's, fell dead, and, perhaps more seriously, one of the oxen was also struck down. The means of transport and traction were reduced to three oxen and four horses.

The situation became serious. The dismounted riders could, in short, resign themselves to continuing on foot. Many squatters had already done so, traversing these deserted regions. But if they had to abandon the wagon, what would become of the female travelers?

Could they cross the 120 miles that still separated them from Twofold Bay?

John Mangles and Glenarvan, deeply worried, examined the surviving horses. Perhaps further accidents could be prevented. Upon examination, no symptoms of illness, or even weakness, were observed. These animals were in perfect health and bravely endured the hardships of the journey. Glenarvan therefore hoped that this strange epidemic would claim no more victims.

Ayrton also shared this opinion, admitting he didn't understand these sudden deaths.

We set off again. The wagon served as a vehicle for the pedestrians who took turns relaxing in it. In the evening, after a march of only ten miles, the signal to halt was given, the camp was organized, and the night passed without incident, under a vast clump of tree ferns, between which enormous bats, aptly named flying foxes, passed.

The following day, January 13th, was good. The accidents of the previous day did not recur. The health of the expedition remained satisfactory.

Horses and oxen bravely performed their duties.

Lady Helena's drawing room was very lively, thanks to the number of visitors who flocked in. Mr. Olbinett busily kept himself busy circulating the refreshments that the thirty-degree heat made necessary. Half a barrel of *Scotch ale* was consumed in its entirety. Barclay and Co. was declared the greatest man in Great Britain, even before Wellington, who

had ever made such good beer. Scottish pride. Jacques Paganel drank a lot and discoursed even more *on everything imaginable* .

A day that had begun so well seemed destined to end well. We had covered a good fifteen miles and skillfully navigated a rather hilly region with reddish soil. Everything suggested that we would camp that very evening on the banks of the Snowy, an important river that flows south of Victoria into the Pacific. Soon the wagon wheel was carving ruts across broad plains of dark alluvium, between clumps of lush grass and fresh patches of gastrolobium. Evening arrived, and a clear, distinct fog on the horizon marked the course of the Snowy. A few more miles were covered, despite the force of the climb. A forest of tall trees rose up at a bend in the road, behind a modest rise in the terrain. Ayrton steered his somewhat overworked team through the large trunks lost in the shadows, and he was already past the edge of the woods, half a mile from the river, when the wagon suddenly sank up to the hub of the wheels.

"Watch out!" he shouted to the riders who were following him.

"What is it?" asked Glenarvan.

"We're bogged down," Ayrton replied.

With his voice and goad, he urged on his oxen, which, bogged down up to their mid-legs, could not move.

“Let’s camp here,” said John Mangles.

"That's the best thing to do," replied Ayrton. "Tomorrow, when it's light, we'll see how we can get out of this."

"Halt!" Glenarvan shouted.

Night had fallen quickly after a brief twilight, but the heat had not dissipated with the light. The atmosphere was thick with stifling vapors.

A few flashes of lightning, dazzling reflections of a distant storm, set the horizon ablaze. They made do with the bogged-down wagon. The dark canopy of tall trees sheltered the travelers' tent. If the rain didn't interfere, they were determined not to complain.

Ayrton, not without difficulty, managed to pull his three oxen from the shifting ground. These courageous beasts were up to their sides in mud. The quartermaster penned them with the four horses and left no one else to choose their fodder. He performed this task intelligently, and that evening Glenarvan noticed his increased care; for which he thanked him, as preserving the team was of paramount importance.

Meanwhile, the travelers ate their share of a rather simple supper. Fatigue and the heat had killed their hunger; they needed not food, but rest. Lady Helena and Miss Grant, after bidding goodnight to their companions, returned to their usual sleeping quarters. As for the men, some slipped into the tent; others, preferring to lie down on the thick grass at the foot of the trees, which is perfectly acceptable in these healthy lands.

Gradually, everyone fell into a deep sleep.

The darkness deepened beneath a curtain of heavy clouds that filled the sky. There wasn't a breath of wind in the air. The silence of the night was broken only by the hooting of the morepork, which played the

minor third with surprising accuracy, like the mournful cuckoos of Europe.

Around eleven o'clock, after a poor, heavy, and tiring sleep, the major awoke. His half-closed eyes were struck by a faint light that ran beneath the tall trees. It looked like a whitish sheet, shimmering like the water of a lake, and Mac Nabbs at first thought that the first glimmers of a fire were spreading across the ground.

He got up and walked towards the woods. He was greatly surprised to find himself in the presence of a purely natural phenomenon. Before his eyes stretched an immense expanse of mushrooms emitting phosphorescence. The luminous spores of these cryptogams radiated in the shadows with a certain intensity.

The major, who was not selfish, was about to wake Paganel so that the scholar could see this phenomenon with his own eyes, when an incident stopped him.

The phosphorescent glow illuminated the woods for a distance of half a mile, and Mac Nabbs thought he saw shadows moving quickly along the lit edge.

Were her eyes deceiving him? Was he the victim of a hallucination?

Mac Nabbs lay down on the ground, and, after a rigorous observation, he distinctly saw several men, who, bending down, rising up, in turn, seemed to be searching on the ground for still fresh traces.

What these men wanted, you had to know.

The major did not hesitate, and without alerting his companions, crawling on the ground like a savage of the prairies, he disappeared under the tall grass.

## Chapter XIX *A Dramatic Turn of Events*

It was a dreadful night. At two in the morning, the rain began to fall, a torrential downpour that the storm clouds poured down until daybreak. The tent became an inadequate shelter. Glenarvan and his companions took refuge in the wagon. They didn't sleep. They talked about this and that. Only the major, whose brief absence had gone unnoticed, simply listened without saying a word. The terrible downpour continued unabated. There was a real fear that it might cause the Snowy River to overflow its banks, in which the wagon, bogged down in the soft ground, would have been in dire straits. So, more than once, Mulrady, Ayrton, and John Mangles went to check the level of the stream and returned soaked from head to toe.

Finally, day broke. The rain stopped, but the sun's rays could not penetrate the thick blanket of clouds. Large puddles of yellowish water, veritable murky and muddy ponds, soiled the ground.

A warm mist wicked through the sodden ground and saturated the atmosphere with an unhealthy humidity.

Glenarvan dealt with the cart first. That was the most important thing in his eyes. The heavy vehicle was examined.

It was bogged down in the middle of a large depression in the ground, in stubborn clay. The front axle was almost completely submerged, and the rear axle up to the axle housing. Pulling this heavy machine out

would be difficult, and it would take the combined strength of all the men, oxen, and horses.

"In any case, we must hurry," said John Mangles. "
This clay will make the operation more difficult as it dries."

"Let's hurry," replied Ayrton.

Glenarvan, his two sailors, John Mangles and Ayrton, entered under the wood where the animals had spent the night.

It was a tall, gloomy-looking forest of gum trees. Nothing but dead trees, widely spaced, stripped of their bark for centuries, or rather, stripped like cork oaks at harvest time. They held the meager network of their bare branches two hundred feet into the air.

Not a bird nested on these aerial skeletons; not a leaf trembled on this dry, rattling canopy, like a jumble of bones. To what cataclysm can this phenomenon, quite common in Australia, of entire forests struck by an epidemic of death, be attributed? No one knows. Neither the oldest natives, nor their ancestors, long since buried in the dead thickets, ever saw them green.

Glenarvan, while walking, looked at the grey sky against which the smallest twigs of the gum trees stood out clearly like fine outlines.

Ayrton was surprised not to find the horses and oxen at the place where he had led them.

These chained animals could not go far, however.

They were searched for in the woods, but without finding them.

Ayrton, taken aback, returned to the side of the Snowy River, lined with magnificent mimosa trees. He called out a well-known cry from his team, but they didn't respond. The quartermaster seemed very worried, and his companions exchanged disappointed glances.

An hour passed in fruitless searching, and Glenarvan was about to return to the wagon, a good mile away, when a neighing struck his ear.

A bellow was heard almost immediately.

"They're here!" cried John Mangles, slipping between the tall clumps of gastrolobium, which were tall enough to hide a herd.

Glenarvan, Mulrady and Ayrton set off in pursuit of him and soon shared his astonishment.

Two oxen and three horses lay on the ground, struck down like the others. Their corpses were already cold, and a flock of scrawny crows, cawing in the mimosa trees, lay in wait for this unexpected prey. Glenarvan and his men exchanged glances, and Wilson couldn't suppress a curse that rose in his throat.

"What do you want, Wilson?" said Lord Glenarvan, barely containing himself. "There's nothing we can do. Ayrton, take the remaining ox and horse. They'll have to get us out of this mess."

“If the wagon weren’t stuck in the mud,” replied John Mangles, “these two animals, walking at a snail’s pace, would be enough to pull it to the shore. We must therefore free this cursed vehicle at all costs.”

"We'll try, John," replied Glenarvan.

Let's return to the camp, where they must be worried about our prolonged absence.

Ayrton removed the ox's hobbles, Mulrady those of the horse, and they returned, following the winding banks of the river. Half an hour later, Paganel and Mac Nabbs, Lady Helena and Miss Grant knew what to expect.

"By my faith!" the major could not help saying, "it is unfortunate, Ayrton, that you did not have to shoe all our animals at the crossing of the Wimerra."

"Why is that, sir?" asked Ayrton.

—Because of all our horses, the one you put in the hands of your farrier, that one alone escaped the common fate!

"That's true," said John Mangles, "and what a strange coincidence!"

"A coincidence, and nothing more," replied the quartermaster, staring fixedly at the major.

Mac Nabbs pressed his lips together, as if trying to hold back words that were about to escape him. Glenarvan, Mangles, and Lady Helena seemed to be waiting for him to finish his thought, but the major remained silent and walked towards the carriage that Ayrton was examining.

"What did he mean?" Glenarvan asked John Mangles.

"I don't know," replied the young captain. "However, the major is not a man to speak without reason."

"No, John," said Lady Helena. "Mac Nabbs must have suspicions about Ayrton."

—Suspicions? Paganel shrugged.

"Which ones?" replied Glenarvan. "Does he suppose him capable of having killed our horses and oxen? But for what purpose? Is Ayrton's interest not the same as ours?"

"You are right, my dear Edward," said Lady Helena, "and I would add that the quartermaster has given us undeniable proofs of devotion since the beginning of the voyage."

"No doubt," replied John Mangles. "But then, what does the major's observation mean?"

"Does he then believe that he agrees with these convicts?" Paganel exclaimed imprudently.

"Which convicts?" asked Miss Grant.

"Mr. Paganel is mistaken," John Mangles replied sharply. "He knows perfectly well that there are no convicts in the province of Victoria."

“Well, that’s absolutely true!” replied Paganel, who wished he hadn’t spoken. “What on earth was I thinking? Who’s ever heard of convicts in Australia? Besides, they turn out to be perfectly decent people as soon as they arrive! The climate! Miss Mary, the moralizing climate…”

The poor scholar, trying to rectify his blunder, was doing what the cart had done: getting bogged down in the mud. Lady Helena watched him, which completely unnerved him. But not wanting to embarrass

him further, she led Miss Mary over to the tent, where Mr. Olbinett was preparing luncheon according to all the rules of the art.

"It is I who deserve to be transported," said
Paganel pitifully.

"I think so," replied Glenarvan.

And upon this reply, given with a seriousness that overwhelmed the worthy geographer, Glenarvan and John Mangles went towards the wagon.

At that moment, Ayrton and the two sailors were working to free it from its deep rut. The ox and horse, harnessed side by side, were pulling with all their might; the traces were stretched to the breaking point, the collars threatening to give way under the strain. Wilson and Mulrady were pushing at the wheels, while the quartermaster, with his voice and the goad, urged on the mismatched team. The heavy vehicle didn't budge. The clay, already dry, held it as if it were sealed in hydraulic cement.

John Mangles had the clay watered to make it less sticky. It was in vain. The cart remained immobilized. After further vigorous blows, both men and animals stopped. Unless the machine could be dismantled piece by piece, it was impossible to pull it out of the quagmire. However, the necessary tools were lacking, and such a task could not be undertaken.

However, Ayrton, who wanted to overcome this obstacle at all costs, was about to make further efforts when Lord Glenarvan stopped him.

"Enough, Ayrton, enough," he said. "We must conserve the ox and the horse we have left. If we have to continue on foot, one will carry the two travelers, the other our provisions. They can therefore still be of useful service."

"Very well, *my lord* ," replied the quartermaster, unharnessing his exhausted beasts.

“Now, my friends,” added Glenarvan, “let us return to the camp, deliberate, examine the situation, see which side holds the good and bad chances, and make a decision.”

A few moments later, the travelers recovered from their bad night with a passable lunch, and the discussion began. Everyone was asked to give their opinion.

First, the position of the camp had to be recorded with extreme precision. Paganel, tasked with this, did so with the necessary rigor.

According to him, the expedition was stopped on the thirty-seventh parallel, at 147°53' longitude, on the banks of the Snowy River.

"What is the exact bearing of the coast at Twofold-Bay?" asked Glenarvan.

—One hundred and fifty degrees, replied Paganel.

—And what are those two degrees and seven minutes worth?…

—Seventy-five miles.

—And Melbourne is…?

—At least two hundred miles.

"Good. Our position being thus determined," said Glenarvan, "what should be done?"

The response was unanimous: go to the coast without delay.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant pledged to walk five miles a day. The courageous women were not afraid to cross on foot, if necessary, the distance that separated Snowy River from Twofold Bay.

"You are the traveler's valiant companion, my dear Helena," said Lord Glenarvan. "But are we certain to find at the bay the resources we will need when we arrive there?"

"Without a doubt," replied Paganel. "Eden is a municipality that has existed for many years."

Its port must have frequent connections with Melbourne. I even suppose that thirty-five miles from here, at the parish of Delegete, on the Victorian frontier, we will be able to resupply the expedition and find means of transport.

"And the *Duncan?"* asked Ayrton. "Do you not think it appropriate, *my lord* , to summon him to the bay?"

"What do you think, John?" asked Glenarvan.

“I don’t think your honor should rush into this matter,” replied the young captain, after a moment’s thought. “There will be plenty of time to give your orders to Tom Austin and summon him to shore.”

"That's obvious," added Paganel.

—Note," John Mangles continued, "that in four or five days we will be in Eden.

"Four or five days!" Ayrton replied, nodding his head. "Take fifteen or twenty, Captain, if you don't want to regret your mistake later!"

"Fifteen or twenty days to travel seventy-five miles!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"At least, *my lord* . You will be crossing the most difficult part of Victoria, a wasteland where everything is lacking, the squatters say, plains of scrubland without paths, where stations have been unable to establish themselves. You will have to walk there with an axe or a torch in hand, and, believe me, you will not be going fast."

Ayrton had spoken in a firm tone. Paganel, on whom questioning glances were cast, approved the quartermaster's words with a nod.

"I acknowledge these difficulties," John Mangles then continued. "Well! In fifteen days, Your Honor will send his orders to *Duncan* ."

"I would add," Ayrton continued, "that the main obstacles will not come from road congestion. We will have to cross the Snowy River, and most likely wait for the water level to recede."

"Wait!" cried the young captain. "Can't we find a ford?"

"I don't think so," Ayrton replied. "This morning I looked for a passable crossing, but in vain. It's rare to encounter such a torrential river at this time of year, and it's an unavoidable circumstance against which I can do nothing."

"So, this Snowy is wide?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

"Wide and deep, madam," replied Ayrton, "a mile wide with a strong current. A good swimmer could not cross it safely."

"Well then! Let's build a canoe," cried Robert, who doubted nothing. "We cut down a tree, we hollow it out, we embark; and that's all there is to it."

"What do you think, Ayrton?" asked Glenarvan.

—I think, *my lord* , that in a month, if no help arrives, we will still be held up on the banks of the Snowy!

"Finally, do you have a better plan?" asked John Mangles with some impatience.

—Yes, if the *Duncan* leaves Melbourne and heads for the east coast!

"Ah! *Duncan again!* And how will his presence at the bay make it any easier for us to achieve our goal?"

Ayrton thought for a few moments before answering, and said rather evasively:

"I do not wish to impose my opinions. What I do is in everyone's interest, and I am prepared to leave as soon as his honor gives the signal to depart."

Then he crossed his arms.

"That's not an answer, Ayrton," Glenarvan continued. "Tell us your plan, and we'll discuss it. What do you propose?"

Ayrton, in a calm and confident voice, spoke in these terms:

"I propose that we not venture beyond the Snowy in our current state of destitution. It is right here that we must expect help, and that help can only come from the *Duncan* . Let us camp here, where provisions are plentiful, and let one of us carry orders to Tom Austin to proceed to Twofold Bay."

A certain amount of astonishment greeted this unexpected proposal, against which John Mangles did not conceal his antipathy.

“Meanwhile,” Ayrton continued, “either the waters of the Snowy will recede, making it possible to find a fordable crossing, or we will have to resort to the canoe, and we will have time to build it. This, *my lord* , is the plan I submit for your approval.”

"Very well, Ayrton," replied Glenarvan. "Your idea deserves serious consideration. Its greatest drawback is that it will cause a delay, but it will save considerable effort and perhaps even real danger. What do you think, my friends?"

"Speak, my dear Mac Nabbs," said Lady Helena. "Since the beginning of the discussion, you have merely listened, and you are very sparing with your words."

“Since you ask for my opinion,” replied the major, “I will give it to you quite frankly. Ayrton seems to have spoken like a wise and prudent man, and I agree with his proposal.”

This response was hardly expected, as Mac Nabbs had always opposed Ayrton's ideas on the matter. Ayrton, surprised, glanced quickly at the major. However, Paganel, Lady Helena, and the sailors

were very willing to support the quartermaster's plan. They no longer hesitated after Mac Nabbs' words.

Glenarvan therefore declared Ayrton's plan adopted in principle.

"And now, John," he added, "don't you think that prudence dictates acting this way, and camping on the banks of the river, while waiting for means of transport?"

"Yes," replied John Mangles, "if our messenger manages to cross the Snowy, which we cannot cross ourselves!"

We looked at the quartermaster, who smiled like a man sure of himself.

"The messenger will not cross the river," he said.

—Ah! said John Mangles.

—He will simply join the road to Lucknow, which will take him straight to Melbourne.

"Two hundred and fifty miles to walk!" exclaimed the young captain.

“On horseback,” replied Ayrton. “There’s one good horse left. It’ll take four days. Add two days for the crossing of the *Duncan* to the bay, twenty-four hours to return to camp, and in a week the messenger will be back with the crew.”

The major nodded in agreement with Ayrton's words, which greatly surprised John Mangles. But the quartermaster's proposal had won unanimous approval, and all that remained was to execute this truly well-conceived plan.

“Now, my friends,” said Glenarvan, “we must choose our messenger. He will have a difficult and perilous mission, I don’t want to hide it. Who will dedicate themselves to their companions and carry our instructions to Melbourne?”

Wilson, Mulrady, John Mangles, Paganel, and Robert himself immediately offered their services. John was particularly insistent that this mission be entrusted to him. But Ayrton, who had not yet spoken, took the floor and said:

"If it pleases your honor, I shall be the one to depart, *my lord* . I am familiar with these lands. Many times I have sailed through more difficult regions. I can extricate myself where another would remain. I therefore claim, in the common interest, this right to go to Melbourne. A word will grant me accreditation with your second-in-command, and in six days, I undertake to bring the *Duncan* to Twofold Bay."

“Well said,” replied Glenarvan. “You are an intelligent and courageous man, Ayrton, and you will succeed.”

The quartermaster was obviously better suited than anyone else to carry out this difficult mission. Everyone understood this and withdrew. John Mangles raised one last objection, saying that Ayrton's presence was necessary to find traces of the *Britannia* or Harry Grant. But the major pointed out that the expedition would remain encamped on the banks of the Snowy until Ayrton's return, that there was no question of resuming these important searches without him, and consequently, that his absence would in no way harm the captain's interests.

"Well, go then, Ayrton," said Glenarvan. "Make haste, and return by way of Eden to our camp on the Snowy."

A flash of satisfaction shone in the quartermaster's eyes.
He turned his head away, but, however quickly he had turned away, John
Mangles had caught that flash; John, by instinct, no
other, felt his distrust of Ayrton growing.

The quartermaster then made his departure preparations, assisted by the two sailors, one of whom looked after his horse, and the other his provisions. Meanwhile, Glenarvan wrote the letter intended for Tom Austin.

He ordered the *Duncan 's second* mate to proceed without delay to Twofold Bay. He recommended the quartermaster as a man in whom he could have complete confidence. Tom Austin, having reached the shore, was to place a detachment of the yacht's sailors under Ayrton's command…

Glenarvan was at this point in his letter when Mac Nabbs, who had been watching him, asked him in a peculiar tone how he wrote Ayrton's name.

“But as he pronounces it,” replied Glenarvan.

"That's a mistake," the major calmly replied. "It's pronounced Ayrton, but it's spelled Ben Joyce!"

## Chapter XX *Aland! Zealand!*

The revelation of Ben Joyce's name had the effect of a thunderbolt. Ayrton sat bolt upright. His hand held a revolver. A shot rang out. Glenarvan fell, struck by a bullet. Gunshots echoed outside.

John Mangles and the sailors, initially surprised, wanted to attack Ben Joyce; but the audacious convict had already disappeared and rejoined his band scattered on the edge of the gum tree wood.

The tent did not offer sufficient cover against the bullets. They had to retreat. Glenarvan, slightly wounded, had gotten back up.

"To the wagon! To the wagon!" cried John Mangles, and he dragged Lady Helena and Mary Grant along, who were soon safe behind the thick sideboards.

There, John, the major, Paganel, and the sailors seized their rifles and stood ready to return fire against the convicts. Glenarvan and Robert had joined the travelers, while Olbinett rushed to the common defense.

These events had unfolded with lightning speed. John Mangles watched intently along the edge of the woods. The gunshots had ceased abruptly with the arrival of Ben Joyce. A profound silence followed the noisy gunfire. A few wisps of white vapor still swirled among the gum trees. The tall clumps of gastrolobium lay motionless. All signs of an attack had vanished.

The major and John Mangles continued their reconnaissance as far as the large trees. The area was deserted. Numerous footprints were visible, and a few half-burned fuses were smoldering on the ground. The major, being a cautious man, extinguished them, for a single spark could easily ignite a raging fire in this forest of dry trees.

“The convicts have disappeared,” said John Mangles.

“Yes,” replied the major, “and this disappearance worries me. I would prefer to see them face to face. A tiger on the plain is better than a snake in the grass. Let’s beat these bushes around the wagon.”

The major and John searched the surrounding countryside. From the edge of the woods to the banks of the Snowy, they didn't encounter a single convict. Ben Joyce's band seemed to have vanished like a flock of malevolent birds. This disappearance was too peculiar to allow for complete security. Therefore, it was decided to remain vigilant. The wagon, a veritable fortress mired in mud, became the center of the camp, and two men, taking turns every hour, kept a watchful eye.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant's first act of care was to dress Glenarvan's wound. The moment her husband fell beneath Ben Joyce's bullet, Lady Helena, terrified, rushed to his side. Then, controlling her anxiety, this courageous woman led Glenarvan to the wagon. There, the wounded man's shoulder was exposed, and the major observed that the bullet, tearing through the flesh, had caused no internal damage. Neither the bone nor the muscles appeared to be affected. The wound was bleeding profusely, but Glenarvan, wiggling the fingers of his forearm, reassured his friends himself about the effects of the shot. Once his dressing was done, he wanted no further attention, and the explanations were given.

The travelers, except for Mulrady and Wilson who were keeping watch outside, had then squeezed themselves into the wagon as best they could. The major was invited to speak.

Before beginning his story, he filled Lady Helena in on things she didn't know: the escape of a gang of convicts from Perth, their appearance in Victoria, and their involvement in the railway disaster. He gave her a copy of the *Australian and New Zealand Gazette* he had bought in Seymour, and added that the police had put a price on the head of Ben Joyce, a notorious bandit whose eighteen months of crime had earned him a sinister reputation.

But how had Mac Nabbs recognized this Ben Joyce in Quartermaster Ayrton? That was the mystery everyone wanted to solve, and the major explained.

From the day of their meeting, Mac Nabbs instinctively distrusted Ayrton. Two or three almost insignificant facts, a glance exchanged between the quartermaster and the blacksmith at the Wimerra-river, Ayrton's hesitation to cross towns and villages, his insistence on summoning the *Duncan* to the coast, the strange death of the animals entrusted to his care, and finally a lack of frankness in his manner, all these details, gradually grouped together, had aroused the major's suspicions.

However, he could not have made a direct accusation without the events that had taken place the previous night.

Mac Nabbs, slipping between the tall clumps of shrubs, came near the suspicious shadows that had just caught his attention half a mile from the camp. The phosphorescent plants cast pale glows in the darkness.

Three men were examining tracks on the ground, freshly made footprints, and among them, Mac Nabbs recognized the blacksmith from Black Point. "It's them," said one. "Yes," replied the other, "that's

the clover of the horseshoes." "It's been like this since the Wimerra." "All the horses are dead." "The poison isn't far away." "That's enough to take down a whole cavalry. What a useful plant, this gastrolobium!"

“Then they fell silent,” added Mac Nabbs, “and walked away. I didn’t know enough. I followed them. Soon the conversation started again: ‘A clever fellow, Ben Joyce,’ said the blacksmith, ‘a famous quartermaster with his shipwreck invention! If his scheme succeeds, it’s a stroke of luck! Damn Ayrton!—call him Ben Joyce, for he’s certainly earned his name!’ At that moment, those scoundrels left the gum tree grove. I knew what I wanted to know, and I returned to the camp, certain that not all convicts in Australia become morally upright, no offense to Paganel!”

The major remained silent.

His companions, silent, were thinking.

"So," said Glenarvan, whose anger made his face pale, "Ayrton has led us here to plunder and murder us!"

—Yes, replied the major.

—And since Wimerra, his gang has been following our tracks and spying on us, waiting for a favorable opportunity?

-Yes.

"But this wretch isn't a sailor on the *Britannia* ? Did he steal his name, Ayrton, steal his enlistment on board?"

All eyes turned to Mac Nabbs, who must have asked himself these questions.

“Here,” he replied in his ever-calm voice, “are the certainties that can be drawn from this obscure situation. In my opinion, this man’s real name is Ayrton. Ben Joyce is his nom de guerre. It is undeniable that he knows Harry Grant and that he was a quartermaster aboard the *Britannia* . These facts, already proven by the precise details Ayrton gave us, are further corroborated by the words of the convicts I have reported to you. Let us therefore not get lost in vain hypotheses, and let us consider it certain that Ben Joyce is Ayrton, just as Ayrton is Ben Joyce—that is to say, a sailor from the *Britannia* who became the leader of a band of convicts.”

Mac Nabbs' explanations were accepted without discussion.

"Now," replied Glenarvan, "will you tell me how and why Harry Grant's quartermaster is in Australia?"

"How so? I don't know," replied Mac Nabbs, "and the police say they know no more about it than I do. Why? I can't say."

There is a mystery here that the future will explain.

"The police don't even know the identities of Ayrton and Ben Joyce," said John Mangles.

"You are right, John," replied the major, "and such a detail would be likely to shed light on his research."

"So," said Lady Helena, "this unfortunate man had entered Paddy O'Moore's farm with criminal intent?"

“There’s no doubt about it,” replied Mac Nabbs. “He was plotting some dirty trick against the Irishman when a better opportunity presented

itself. Chance brought us together. He heard Glenarvan’s story, the tale of the shipwreck, and, being a bold man, he quickly decided to take advantage of it. The expedition was decided upon. At the Wimerra, he contacted one of his men, the blacksmith from Black Point, and left recognizable traces of our passage. His band followed us. A poisonous plant enabled him to gradually kill our oxen and horses. Then, when the time was right, he bogged us down in the Snowy marshes and handed us over to the convicts under his command.”

Everything had been revealed about Ben Joyce. His past had just been pieced together by the major, and the wretch appeared for what he truly was: a daring and formidable criminal. His clearly demonstrated intentions demanded extreme vigilance from Glenarvan. Fortunately, there was less to fear from the unmasked bandit than from the traitor.

But from this clearly clarified situation emerged a serious consequence. No one had yet considered it. Only Mary Grant, leaving all this past to be discussed, looked to the future. John Mangles, first of all, saw her thus pale and despairing. He understood what was going through her mind.

"Miss Mary! Miss Mary!" he cried. "You're crying!"

"Are you crying, my child?" said Lady Helena.

"My father! Madam, my father!" replied the young girl.

She could not continue. But a sudden revelation dawned on everyone. They understood Miss Mary's pain, why tears were falling from her eyes, why her father's name rose from her heart to her lips.

The discovery of Ayrton's treachery destroyed all hope. The convict, to lure Glenarvan, had fabricated a shipwreck. In their conversation overheard by Mac Nabbs, the convicts had made it clear. The *Britannia* had never been wrecked on the Twofold Bay reefs! Harry Grant had never set foot on the Australian mainland!

For the second time, the misinterpretation of the document had just sent the *Britannia researchers down a false trail!*

Faced with this situation, with the children's suffering, everyone remained in a somber silence. Who could still find a word of hope? Robert wept in his sister's arms. Paganel murmured in a despondent voice:

"Ah! Unfortunate document! You can boast of having put the brains of a dozen good people to a severe test!"

And the worthy geographer, truly furious with himself, beat his forehead to the point of demolishing it.

However, Glenarvan rejoined Mulrady and Wilson, who were assigned to guard the outer area. A profound silence reigned over the plain between the edge of the woods and the river. Large, motionless clouds hung heavy against the vault of the sky. In the midst of this atmosphere, numb with a deep torpor, the slightest sound would have been clearly transmitted, yet nothing could be heard. Ben Joyce and his band must have retreated to a considerable distance, for flocks of birds frolicking on the lower branches of the trees, a few *kangaroos* peacefully grazing on young shoots, and a pair of eurus whose trusting heads peered between the large clumps of shrubs, all proved that the presence of man did not disturb this peaceful solitude.

"For the past hour," Glenarvan asked his two sailors, "you have seen nothing, heard nothing?"

"Nothing, Your Honor," replied Wilson. "The convicts must be several miles from here."

"They must not have been strong enough to attack us," added Mulrady. "This Ben Joyce must have wanted to recruit some bandits of his kind from among the *bushrangers* who roam the foothills of the Alps."

“That’s likely, Mulrady,” replied Glenarvan. “Those scoundrels are cowards. They know we’re armed, and well-armed at that. Perhaps they’re waiting for nightfall to begin their attack. We’ll have to be extra vigilant at dusk. Ah! If only we could leave this marshy plain and continue on to the coast! But the swollen river blocks our way. I’d pay a fortune for a raft that would carry us across!”

"Why doesn't Your Honor," said Wilson, "order us to build this raft? There's no shortage of wood."

"No, Wilson," replied Glenarvan, "this Snowy is not a river, it's an impassable torrent."

At that moment, John Mangles, the major, and Paganel joined Glenarvan. They had just examined the Snowy River. The waters, swollen by the recent rains, had risen another foot above the low-water mark. They formed a torrential current, comparable to the rapids of America. It was impossible to venture onto these roaring sheets and impetuous cascades, broken into a thousand eddies where chasms were being carved.

John Mangles declared the passage impassable.

"But," he added, "we mustn't stay here without trying anything. What we wanted to do before Ayrton's betrayal is even more necessary afterward."

—What do you say, John? asked Glenarvan.

—I say that help is urgently needed, and since we cannot go to Twofold Bay, we must go to Melbourne. We have one horse left. May your honor grant it to me, *my lord* , and I will go to Melbourne.

"But that's a dangerous undertaking, John," said Glenarvan. "Not to mention the perils of this two-hundred-mile journey through an unknown country, the paths and the road must be guarded by Ben Joyce's accomplices."

"I know, *my lord* , but I also know that the situation cannot continue. Ayrton only asked for eight days' leave to bring back the men from the *Duncan* . I want to be back on the banks of the Snowy in six days. Well then! What does your honor command?"

“Before Glenarvan speaks,” said Paganel, “I must make one observation. Let us go to Melbourne, yes, but let John Mangles not be exposed to those dangers. He is the captain of the *Duncan* , and as such he cannot risk himself. I will go in his place.”

"Well said," replied the major. "And why would it be you, Paganel?"

"Aren't we here?" cried Mulrady and Wilson.

"And do you think," Mac Nabbs continued, "that I'm afraid of a two-hundred-mile trek on horseback?"

“My friends,” said Glenarvan, “if any of us is to go to Melbourne, let fate decide. Paganel, write down our names…”

"Not yours, at least, *my lord* ," said John Mangles.

"And why?" asked Glenarvan.

—You separate yourself from Lady Helena, you whose wound is not even healed!

"Glenarvan," said Paganel, "you cannot leave the expedition."

"No," the major replied. "Your place is here, Edward, you must not leave."

“There are dangers to be faced,” replied Glenarvan, “and I will not leave my share to others. Write, Paganel. Let my name be mingled with the names of my comrades, and may heaven grant that it be the first to be published!”

They bowed to this will. Glenarvan's name was added to the others. The drawing of lots took place, and Mulrady was chosen. The brave sailor let out a hurrah of satisfaction.

" *My lord* , I am ready to go," he said.

Glenarvan shook Mulrady's hand. Then he returned to the wagon, leaving the major and John Mangles in charge of the camp.

Lady Helena was immediately informed of the decision to send a messenger to Melbourne and of the fate of the lot. She found words for Mulrady that touched the heart of this valiant sailor. He was known to be brave, intelligent, robust, and unfazed by fatigue, and truly, fate could not have chosen better.

Mulrady's departure was set for eight o'clock, after the brief twilight of evening. Wilson took charge of preparing the horse. He had the idea of changing the telltale shoe on its left hoof and replacing it with the shoe of one of the horses that had died during the night. The convicts would not be able to recognize Mulrady's tracks, nor follow him, since they were not mounted.

While Wilson attended to these details, Glenarvan prepared the letter for Tom Austin; but his injured arm hampered him, and he asked Paganel to write it for him. The scholar, absorbed in a fixed idea, seemed oblivious to what was happening around him. It must be said that, throughout this series of unfortunate events, Paganel thought only of his misinterpreted document. He twisted the words to extract a new meaning from them and remained immersed in the depths of interpretation.

Therefore, he did not hear Glenarvan's request, and the latter was forced to repeat it.

"Ah! Very well," replied Paganel, "I am ready!"

And while speaking, Paganel mechanically prepared his notebook. He tore out a blank page, then, pencil in hand, he set about writing.

Glenarvan began to dictate the following instructions:

"Orders to Tom Austin to put to sea without delay and steer the *Duncan* ..."

Paganel was finishing the last word when his eyes happened to fall on the copy of the *Australian and New Zealand* lying on the ground. The folded newspaper revealed only the last two syllables of its title. Paganel's pencil stopped, and he seemed to forget Glenarvan completely, his letter, his dictation.

"Well? Paganel, known as Glenarvan.

—Ah! said the geographer, letting out a cry.

"What's wrong?" asked the major.

"Nothing! Nothing!" replied Paganel.

Then, lower down, he repeated: " *Aland! Aland! Aland!* "

He stood up. He grabbed the newspaper. He shook it, trying to hold back words that were about to escape his lips. Lady Helena, Mary, Robert, Glenarvan, watched him, unable to understand this inexplicable agitation.

Paganel looked like a man suddenly struck by madness. But this state of nervous agitation did not last. He gradually calmed down; the joy that shone in his eyes faded; he resumed his place and said in a calm tone:

"Whenever you wish, *my lord* , I am at your service."

Glenarvan resumed dictating his letter, which was finally worded as follows:

"Orders to Tom Austin to put to sea without delay and steer the *Duncan* at thirty-seven degrees latitude to the east coast of Australia…"

"From Australia?" said Paganel. "Ah! Yes! From Australia!"

Then he finished his letter and presented it to Glenarvan for signature. Glenarvan, hampered by his recent injury, managed this formality as best he could. The letter was closed and sealed. Paganel, his hand still trembling with emotion, wrote the following address:

Tom Austin, second in command aboard the yacht *Duncan* , Melbourne.

Then he left the cart, gesturing and repeating these incomprehensible words: " *Aland! Aland! Zealand!* "

## Chapter XXI *Four Days of Anguish*

The rest of the day passed without further incident.

Everything was finished being prepared for Mulrady's departure. The brave sailor was happy to give his honor this mark of devotion.

Paganel had regained his composure and his usual demeanor. His gaze still betrayed a deep concern, but he seemed determined to keep it secret. He undoubtedly had strong reasons for doing so, for the major heard him repeat these words, like a man struggling with himself:

"No! No! They wouldn't believe me! And besides, what's the point? It's too late!"

Having made this decision, he set about giving Mulrady the necessary directions to reach Melbourne, and with the map in front of him, he plotted his route. All the tracks, that is, the prairie paths, led to the Lucknow road. This road, after descending straight south to the coast, made a sharp turn towards Melbourne. It was essential to follow it and not attempt to cut across unfamiliar territory.

So nothing could be simpler. Mulrady couldn't go astray.

As for the dangers, they no longer existed a few miles beyond the camp, where Ben Joyce and his troop were presumably lying in ambush. Once past, Mulrady was confident he could quickly outrun the convicts and successfully complete his important mission.

At six o'clock, the meal was eaten together. A torrential downpour was falling. The tent no longer offered sufficient shelter, and everyone had sought refuge in the wagon. It was, moreover, a safe retreat. The clay held it firmly in place, adhering to the ground like a fort to its foundations. The arsenal consisted of seven rifles and seven revolvers, enough to withstand a fairly long siege, as neither ammunition nor provisions were lacking. Now, in less than six days, the *Duncan* would anchor in Twofold Bay. Twenty-four hours later, its crew would reach the other bank of the Snowy, and if the passage was not yet passable, the convicts, at least, would be forced to retreat before superior forces. But, above all, Mulrady had to succeed in his perilous undertaking.

At eight o'clock, the night became very dark. It was time to leave. The horse destined for Mulrady was brought in. Its hooves, wrapped in cloths as an extra precaution, made no sound on the ground.

The animal appeared tired, and yet the safety and strength of its legs depended on the salvation of all.

The major advised Mulrady to take it easy on him, as long as he was out of the reach of the convicts.

A half-day delay was better than arriving safely.

John Mangles handed his sailor a revolver which he had just loaded with the utmost care. A formidable weapon in the hand of a man who does not tremble, for six shots, bursting forth in a few seconds, easily swept away a path obstructed by criminals.

Mulrady mounted his horse.

"Here is the letter you will give to Tom Austin," Glenarvan told him. "He must not waste an hour! He must set out for Twofold Bay, and if he does not find us there, if we have not been able to cross the Snowy, he must come to us without delay! Now go, my brave sailor, and may God guide you."

Glenarvan, Lady Helena, Mary Grant, all shook Mulrady's hand. This departure, on a dark and rainy night, on a road strewn with dangers, through the unknown immensities of a desert, would have impressed a less firm heart than that of the sailor.

"Farewell, *my lord* ," he said in a calm voice, and soon disappeared along a path that ran along the edge of the woods.

At that moment, the gust of wind intensified. The high branches of the eucalyptus trees rattled in the shadows with a dull thud. The sound of dry branches falling onto the sodden ground could be heard.

More than one giant tree, its sap gone but still standing, fell during that tempestuous squall. The wind howled through the creaking wood and mingled its sinister wail with the roar of the Snowy. The heavy clouds it drove eastward trailed to the ground like rags of vapor. A gloomy darkness further heightened the horror of the night.

After Mulrady's departure, the travelers huddled together in the carriage. Lady Helena and Mary Grant, Glenarvan and Paganel occupied the first compartment, which had been hermetically sealed.

In the second, Olbinett, Wilson, and Robert had found adequate shelter. The major and John Mangles kept watch outside.

This act of caution was necessary because an attack by the convicts was easy, and therefore possible.

The two faithful watchmen were therefore on their watch, and philosophically received the gusts that the night spat in their faces. They tried to pierce with their eyes this darkness conducive to ambush, for the ear could perceive nothing amidst the sounds of the storm, the whining of the wind, the rattling of branches, the falling of tree trunks, and the roar of the raging waters.

However, brief lulls occasionally suspended the squall. The wind fell silent as if catching its breath. The Snowy moaned alone through the still reeds and the black curtain of gum trees. The silence seemed deeper in these momentary lulls. The major and John Mangles listened attentively.

It was during one of these respites that a high-pitched whistle reached them.

John Mangles quickly went to the major.

"Did you hear that?" he said to him.

"Yes," said Mac Nabbs. "Is it a man or an animal?"

"A man," replied John Mangles.

Then they both listened. The inexplicable whistling sound returned suddenly, and something like a detonation answered it, but almost imperceptible, for the storm was now roaring with renewed violence. Mac Nabbs and John Mangles could not hear each other. They moved downwind of the wagon.

At that moment, the leather curtains were lifted, and Glenarvan joined his two companions. He had heard, like them, that sinister whistling sound, and the detonation that had echoed under the tarpaulin.

"In which direction?" he asked.

"There," said John, pointing to the dark *track* in the direction Mulrady had taken.

-How far?

"The wind was blowing in our favor," replied John Mangles. "It must have been at least three miles away."

—Come on! said Glenarvan, throwing his rifle over his shoulder.

"Let's not go!" replied the major. "It's a trap to lure us away from the wagon."

"And what if Mulrady fell under the blows of these wretches!" continued Glenarvan, who seized Mac Nabbs' hand.

"We will know tomorrow," replied the major coldly, firmly resolved to prevent Glenarvan from committing an unnecessary imprudence.

"You cannot leave the camp, *my lord* ," said John, "I will go alone."

"No more!" Mac Nabbs retorted energetically.

Do you want us to be killed piecemeal, our strength diminished, and put at the mercy of these evildoers? If Mulrady was their victim, it is a misfortune that should not be compounded by a second.

Mulrady left, chosen by fate. If fate had chosen me in his place, I would have left like him, but I would neither have asked for nor expected any help.

By detaining Glenarvan and John Mangles, the major was right in every respect. Trying to reach the sailor, running through this dark night to meet the convicts ambushed in some thicket, was foolish, and, moreover, pointless.

Glenarvan's small troop did not have so many men that it could sacrifice any more.

However, Glenarvan seemed unwilling to yield to these arguments. His hand fidgeted with his rifle. He paced back and forth around the wagon, listening intently for the slightest sound. He tried to pierce the sinister darkness with his eyes. The thought of one of his own, struck by a mortal blow, abandoned without help, calling in vain to those for whom he had given his life, tormented him. Mac Nabbs didn't know if

he could restrain him, if Glenarvan, driven by his emotions, wouldn't throw himself into the fray at Ben Joyce's hands.

“Edward,” he told him, “calm down. Listen to a friend. Think of Lady Helena, of Mary Grant, of all those who remain! Besides, where do you want to go? Where can you find Mulrady? He was attacked two miles from here! Which road? Which path to take?…”

At that moment, and as if in response to the major, a cry of distress was heard.

"Listen!" said Glenarvan.

This cry came from the very direction where the explosion had occurred, less than a quarter of a mile away. Glenarvan, pushing back Mac Nabbs, was already advancing along the path when, three hundred paces from the wagon, these words were heard:

"Mine! Mine!"

It was a plaintive and desperate voice. John Mangles and the major rushed towards it.

A few moments later, they spotted a human form dragging itself along the undergrowth and uttering mournful groans.

Mulrady was there, wounded, dying, and when his companions lifted him up, they felt their hands get wet with blood.

The rain intensified, and the wind raged in the branches of the "dead trees." It was amidst the blows of the gust that Glenarvan, the major, and John Mangles carried Mulrady's body

.

Upon their arrival, everyone rose. Paganel, Robert, Wilson, and Olbinett left the carriage, and Lady Helena gave up her compartment to poor Mulrady. The major removed the sailor's jacket, which was dripping with blood and rain. He discovered his wound. It was a dagger wound in the unfortunate man's right side.

Mac Nabbs skillfully dressed the wound. Whether the weapon had struck vital organs, he couldn't say. A spurt of scarlet blood flowed from it; the pallor and weakness of the wounded man proved that he had been seriously injured. The major placed a thick wad of tinder over the wound, which he had first washed with fresh water, then some lint cakes held in place with a bandage. He managed to stop the bleeding. Mulrady was placed on his side, with his head and chest elevated, and Lady Helena gave him a few sips of water.

After a quarter of an hour, the wounded man, who had been motionless until then, made a movement. His eyes opened slightly. His lips murmured incoherent words, and the major, putting his ear close, heard him repeat:

" *My lord* ... The letter... Ben Joyce..."

The major repeated these words and looked at his companions. What did Mulrady mean? Ben Joyce had attacked the sailor, but why? Wasn't it simply to stop him, to prevent him from reaching the *Duncan?* This letter…

Glenarvan searched Mulrady's pockets. The letter addressed to Tom Austin was no longer there!

The night was spent in worry and anguish. There was constant fear that the wounded man would die. A burning fever was consuming him.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant, two Sisters of Charity, never left his side. Never was a sick man so well cared for, and by more compassionate hands.

Day broke. The rain had stopped. Large clouds still rolled in the depths of the sky. The ground was littered with the debris of branches. The clay, soaked by torrents of water, had given way once more.

The area around the cart was becoming difficult, but it could not get bogged down any deeper.

John Mangles, Paganel, and Glenarvan went out at daybreak to reconnoiter the area around the camp. They went back up the path, still stained with blood. They saw no trace of Ben Joyce or his gang.

They pressed on to the spot where the attack had taken place. There, two corpses lay on the ground, riddled with Mulrady's bullets. One was the body of the blacksmith from Black Point. His face, contorted by death, was horrifying.

Glenarvan did not pursue his investigations further. Prudence prevented him from straying too far. He therefore returned to the cart, deeply absorbed by the gravity of the situation.

"We cannot consider sending another messenger to Melbourne," he said.

"However, it must be done, *my lord* ," replied John Mangles, "and I will attempt to pass where my sailor could not."

"No, John. You don't even have a horse to carry you for those two hundred miles!"

Indeed, Mulrady's horse, the only one left, had not reappeared. Had it fallen victim to the murderers? Was it running lost across the desert?

Hadn't the convicts seized it?

“Whatever happens,” Glenarvan continued, “we will not separate again. Let us wait eight days, fifteen days, until the waters of the Snowy return to their normal level. We will then reach Twofold Bay in short stages and from there we will send the order to *Duncan* , by a safer route, to reach the coast.”

"That's the only course of action to take," replied Paganel.

"So, my friends," Glenarvan continued, "no more separation. A man risks too much venturing alone into this bandit-infested desert. And now, may God save our poor sailor, and protect us as well!"

Glenarvan was doubly right: first, to forbid any isolated attempt, and second, to wait patiently on the banks of the Snowy for a passable crossing. He was barely thirty-five miles from Delegete, the first border town in New South Wales, where he would find transport to reach Twofold Bay.

From there, he would telegraph the orders relating to the *Duncan to Melbourne* .

These measures were wise, but they were taken too late. If Glenarvan hadn't sent Mulrady on the road to Lucknow, how many misfortunes would have been avoided, not to mention the sailor's murder!

Upon returning to camp, he found his companions less affected. They seemed to have regained hope.

"He's better! He's better!" cried Robert, running to meet Lord Glenarvan.

—Mulrady?…

"Yes, Edward," replied Lady Helena. "There has been a reaction. The major is more reassured. Our sailor will live."

"Where is Mac Nabbs?" asked Glenarvan.

"Near him. Mulrady wanted to talk to him. We mustn't disturb them."

Indeed, for the past hour, the injured man had woken up from his drowsiness, and his fever had decreased.

But Mulrady's first concern, upon regaining his memory and speech, was to ask for Lord Glenarvan, or, failing him, the Major. Mac Nabbs, seeing him so weak, wanted to forbid him any conversation; but Mulrady insisted with such energy that the Major had to yield.

The interview had already been going on for a few minutes when Glenarvan returned. All that remained was to wait for Mac Nabbs ' report .

Soon, the curtains of the wagon stirred and the major appeared. He joined his friends at the foot of a gum tree, where the tent had been pitched. His face, usually so cold, showed grave concern.

When his gaze fell upon Lady Helena, upon the young girl, it expressed a painful sadness.

Glenarvan questioned him, and this is essentially what the major had just learned.

Leaving the camp, Mulrady followed one of the paths indicated by Paganel. He hurried, at least as much as the darkness of the night allowed.

By his estimation, he had covered a distance of about two miles when several men—five, he believed—threw themselves at his horse's head. The animal reared up. Mulrady seized his revolver and fired. It seemed to him that two of the assailants fell. In the flash of the gunshot, he recognized Ben Joyce. But that was all. He didn't have time to fully discharge his weapon. A violent blow struck him in the right side, knocking him to the ground.

However, he had not yet lost consciousness.

The murderers thought he was dead. He felt himself being searched. Then these words were spoken:

"I have the letter," said one of the convicts. "Give it to me," replied Ben Joyce, "and now *Duncan* is ours!"

At this point in Mac Nabbs's story, Glenarvan could not suppress a cry.

Mac Nabbs continued:

“Now, you others,” Ben Joyce continued, “grab the horse. In two days, I’ll be aboard the *Duncan* ; in six, at Twofold Bay. That’s the rendezvous point. My *lord ’s party* will still be bogged down in the Snowy marshes.

Cross the river at Kemple Pier Bridge, reach the shore, and wait for me. I'll find a way to get you on board. Once the crew is at sea, with a ship like the *Duncan* , we'll be masters of the Indian Ocean." "Hurrah for Ben Joyce!" cried the convicts. Mulrady's horse was brought in, and Ben Joyce galloped off down the Lucknow road, while the band made its way southeast to the Snowy River. Mulrady, though badly wounded, had the strength to drag himself to within three hundred paces of the camp where we found him nearly dead.

"That," said Mac Nabbs, "is the story of Mulrady. Now you understand why the brave sailor was so eager to speak."

This revelation terrified Glenarvan and his people.

"Pirates! Pirates!" cried Glenarvan. "My crew massacred! My *Duncan* in the hands of these bandits!"

"Yes! Because Ben Joyce will surprise the ship," replied the major, "and then…"

—Well! We must reach the coast before those wretches! said Paganel.

"But how do we cross the Snowy?" said Wilson.

"Like them," replied Glenarvan. "They will cross the Kemple-Pier bridge, and we will cross it too."

"But what will become of Mulrady?" asked Lady Helena.

"We'll carry it! We'll take turns! Can I really deliver my defenseless crew to Ben Joyce's troop?"

The idea of crossing the Snowy at Kemple Pier bridge was feasible, but risky. The convicts could establish themselves there and defend it. They would be at least thirty against seven! But there are times when numbers don't matter, when you have to march anyway.

“ *My lord* ,” said John Mangles, “before risking our last chance, before venturing towards that bridge, it is prudent to go and reconnoiter it. I will take care of it.”

"I will accompany you, John," replied Paganel.

With this proposal accepted, John Mangles and Paganel prepared to leave immediately. They were to go down the Snowy, follow its banks until they reached the point indicated by Ben Joyce, and above all, remain hidden from the sight of the convicts who were expected to patrol the banks.

So, equipped with provisions and well armed, the two courageous companions set off, and soon disappeared, slipping away among the tall reeds of the river.

They waited for them all day. When evening came, they still hadn't returned. Fears were running high.

Finally, around eleven o'clock, Wilson signaled their return.

Paganel and John Mangles were exhausted from the fatigues of a ten-mile march.

"This bridge! Does this bridge even exist?" asked Glenarvan, who rushed towards them.

"Yes! A vine bridge," said John Mangles. "The convicts did cross it, indeed. But…"

—But… said Glenarvan, who sensed a new misfortune.

"They burned it after they passed through!" replied Paganel.

## Chapter XXII *Eden*

This was not the time for despair, but for action. With the Kemple Pier bridge destroyed, the Snowy River had to be crossed at all costs, and they had to get ahead of Ben Joyce's group to the shores of Twofold Bay. So they wasted no time on idle talk, and the next day, January 16th, John Mangles and Glenarvan came to observe the river in order to organize the crossing.

The tumultuous waters, swollen by the rains, did not subside. They swirled with indescribable fury. To confront them was to court death. Glenarvan, arms crossed, head bowed, remained motionless.

"Do you want me to try and swim to the other side?" said
John Mangles.

“No! John,” replied Glenarvan, holding back the bold young man with his hand, “let’s wait!”

And they both returned to camp. The day passed in
the most intense anguish. Ten times, Glenarvan returned to the Snowy. He tried to devise some daring way to cross it.
But in vain.

Even if a torrent of lava had flowed between its banks, it would not have been more impassable.

During those long, wasted hours, Lady Helena, advised by the major, lavished the most attentive care on Mulrady. The sailor felt himself returning to life. Mac Nabbs dared to assert that no vital organ had been damaged. The loss of his blood was sufficient to explain the sick man's weakness. Thus, with his wound closed and the bleeding stopped, he now awaited only time and rest for his complete recovery. Lady Helena had insisted that he occupy the first compartment of the wagon.

Mulrady felt utterly ashamed. His biggest worry was that his condition might delay Glenarvan, and he had to be promised that he would be left at the camp, under Wilson's care, if crossing the Snowy became possible.

Unfortunately, the passage was impassable neither that day nor the following day, January 17th. Being thus stopped filled Glenarvan with despair. Lady Helena and the major tried in vain to calm him, to urge him to be patient. To be patient, when, at that very moment, Ben Joyce might be arriving aboard the yacht!

When the *Duncan* , casting off its moorings, forced its steam to reach that fatal coast, and when each hour brought it closer to it!

John Mangles felt all of Glenarvan's anxieties in his heart. Therefore, determined to overcome the obstacle at all costs, he built a canoe in the Australian style, using large pieces of gum tree bark. These very light planks were held together by wooden bars, forming a rather fragile vessel.

The captain and the sailor tried out this frail canoe during the day of the 18th. They did everything in their power—skill, strength, dexterity, courage—that they could muster. But, scarcely had they entered the current, they capsized and nearly paid for this reckless experiment with their lives. The boat, swept away in the eddies, disappeared. John Mangles and Wilson hadn't even made it ten fathoms up this river, swollen by rain and snowmelt, and which was then a mile wide.

The days of January 19th and 20th were lost in this situation. The major and Glenarvan traveled up the Snowy River for five miles without finding a fordable crossing. Everywhere the waters were just as impetuous, just as torrential. The entire southern slope of the Australian Alps poured its liquid masses into this single channel.

Hopes of saving the *Duncan had to be abandoned* .

Five days had passed since Ben Joyce's departure. The yacht must have been ashore by now, in the hands of the convicts!

However, this state of affairs could not continue. Temporary floods subside quickly, precisely because of their intensity. Indeed, on the morning of the 21st, Paganel observed that the water level, above the low-water mark, was beginning to decrease. He reported his findings to Glenarvan.

"Eh! What does it matter now?" replied Glenarvan, "it's too late!"

"That's no reason to prolong our stay at the camp," replied the major.

"Indeed," replied John Mangles. "Tomorrow, perhaps, the passage will be passable."

"And will that save my unfortunate crew?" cried Glenarvan.

"Let your honor listen to me," John Mangles continued.

I know Tom Austin. He must have carried out your orders and left as soon as his departure was possible. But who's to say the *Duncan* was ready, that its damage had been repaired by the time Ben Joyce arrived in Melbourne? And what if the yacht couldn't even set sail, if it was delayed by a day or two?

"You're right, John!" replied Glenarvan. "We must reach Twofold Bay . We're only thirty-five miles from Delegete!"

"Yes," said Paganel, "and in this city we will find fast means of transport. Who knows if we won't arrive in time to prevent a disaster?"

"Let's go!" cried Glenarvan.

Immediately, John Mangles and Wilson set about building a large boat.

Experience had shown that pieces of bark could not withstand the force of the torrent. John felled gum tree trunks and fashioned them into a rough but sturdy raft. The work was long, and the day passed without the craft being finished. It was only completed the following day.

So, the waters of the Snowy had dropped considerably. The torrent was once again a river, albeit a fast-flowing one. However, by taking a different route, by controlling it within a certain

limit,
John hoped to reach the opposite bank.

At half past noon, we loaded what each person could carry of provisions for a two-day journey. The rest was abandoned with the cart and the tent.

Mulrady was well enough to be transported; his recovery was progressing rapidly.

At one o'clock, everyone boarded the raft, which was secured to the shore by its mooring line. John Mangles had rigged a kind of oar on the starboard side and entrusted it to Wilson to steer the craft against the current and reduce its drift. Wilson himself, standing at the stern, intended to steer using a crude sculling oar. Lady Helena and Mary Grant occupied the center of the raft, near Mulrady; Glenarvan, the Major, Paganel, and Robert surrounded them, ready to come to their aid.

"Are we ready, Wilson?" John Mangles asked his sailor.

"Yes, Captain," replied Wilson, grasping his oar with a strong hand.

"Be careful, and support us against the current."

John Mangles started the raft, and with a push he launched it across the waters of the Snowy. All went well for about fifteen fathoms. Wilson resisted the drift. But soon the craft was caught in eddies and spun around, unable to keep it straight despite the oars or the sculling oar. Despite their efforts, Wilson and John Mangles soon found themselves in an inverted position, which made rowing impossible.

They had to resign themselves to it. There was no way to stop the raft's spinning motion. It was turning with dizzying speed, and it was drifting. John Mangles, standing pale, his teeth clenched, watched the swirling water.

However, the raft entered the middle of the Snowy. It was then half a mile downstream from its starting point. There, the current was extremely strong, and, as it broke the eddies, it gave the craft some stability.

John and Wilson picked up their oars and managed to push each other in an oblique direction.

Their maneuver brought them closer to the left bank. They were only fifty fathoms away when Wilson's oar snapped clean off. The raft, unsupported, was swept away. John tried to resist, risking breaking his sculling oar.

Wilson, his hands bloodied, joined his efforts to those of her.

Finally, they succeeded, and the raft, after a crossing that lasted more than half an hour, struck the steep bank. The impact was violent; the logs splintered, the ropes snapped, and water poured in, boiling. The travelers barely had time to grab onto the overhanging bushes. They pulled Mulrady and the two half-drenched women to their side. In short, everyone was saved, but most of the provisions and weapons, except for the major's rifle, drifted away with the wreckage of the raft.

The river had been crossed. The small group found themselves practically without resources, thirty-five miles from Delegete, in the middle of those unknown wastelands of the Victorian frontier. There,

one encounters neither settlers nor squatters, for the region is uninhabited, except by fierce and marauding *bushrangers .*

They resolved to leave without delay. Mulrady saw that he would be a cause for embarrassment; he asked to stay, and even to stay alone, to await help from Delegete.

Glenarvan refused. He couldn't reach Delegete for three days, the coast for five, that is, by January 26th. But the *Duncan* had left Melbourne on the 16th. What did a few hours' delay matter to him now?

“No, my friend,” he said, “I don’t want to abandon anyone. Let’s make a stretcher, and we’ll take turns carrying you.”

The stretcher was made of eucalyptus branches covered with boughs, and, willingly or unwillingly, Mulrady had to take his place on it. Glenarvan wanted to be the first to carry his sailor. He took the stretcher at one end, Wilson at the other, and they set off.

What a sad sight, and what a bad end to this voyage that had begun so well! They were no longer going in search of Harry Grant. This continent, where he wasn't, where he had never been, threatened to be fatal to those who sought his traces. And when his intrepid compatriots reached the Australian coast, they wouldn't even find the *Duncan* there to bring them home!

That first day passed silently and painfully. Every ten minutes, they took turns carrying the stretcher.

All the sailor's companions endured this fatigue, further increased by the intense heat, without complaint.

That evening, after only five miles, we camped under a clump of gum trees. The remaining provisions, salvaged from the shipwreck, provided the evening meal. But now we could only rely on the major's rifle.

The night was bad. Rain joined in. Day seemed slow to break. They set off again. The major didn't find an opportunity to fire a single shot. This dismal region was more than just a desert, since even animals didn't frequent it.

Fortunately, Robert discovered a bustard's nest, and in that nest, a dozen large eggs which Olbinett cooked under the hot ashes. This, along with some purslane plants growing at the bottom of a ravine, made up their entire lunch on the 23rd.

The journey then became extremely difficult. The sandy plains were bristling with spinifex, a thorny grass known in Melbourne as porcupine grass. It tore clothes to shreds and left legs bleeding. The courageous women did not complain, however; they forged ahead bravely, setting an example, encouraging one another with a word or a glance.

That evening, we stopped at the foot of Mount Bulla-Bulla, on the banks of Jungalla Creek. Supper would have been meager had Mac Nabbs not finally killed a large rat, the "mus conditor," which enjoys an excellent reputation as a food. Olbinett roasted it, and it would have seemed even more impressive than its reputation had it been the size of a sheep.

However, they had to make do with it. They gnawed at it to the bone.

On the 23rd, the tired but still energetic travelers set off again. After going around the base of the mountain, they crossed long meadows whose grass seemed to be made of whale baleen.

It was a tangle of darts, a jumble of sharp bayonets, where the way had to be cleared sometimes by axe, sometimes by fire.

That morning, there was no question of having lunch. Nothing is as arid as this region strewn with quartz debris.

Not only hunger, but also thirst was cruelly felt. A scorching atmosphere compounded their cruel effects. Glenarvan and his men were barely covering half a mile an hour. If this lack of food and water continued until evening, they would collapse on this road and never rise again.

But when man lacks everything, when he sees himself without resources, at the moment when he thinks that the time has come to succumb to suffering, then the intervention of providence manifests itself.

She offered the water in "cephalotes," a kind of cup filled with a beneficial liquid, which hung from the branches of coral-like shrubs. Everyone quenched their thirst and felt life revive within them.

Food was what sustained the natives when game, insects, and snakes became scarce. Paganel discovered, in the dried-up bed of a creek, a plant whose excellent properties had often been described to him by one of his colleagues from the geographical society.

It was the " *nardou* ", a cryptogam of the Marsileaceae family, the very one that prolonged the lives of Burke and King in the deserts of the

interior.

Beneath its clover-like leaves grew dried sporules. These sporules, the size of a lentil, were crushed between two stones, yielding a kind of flour. From this, they made a coarse loaf of bread, which eased the pangs of hunger. This plant grew abundantly in that place. Olbinett was thus able to gather a large quantity, and food was secured for several days.

The next day, the 24th, Mulrady walked part of the way. His wound was completely healed. The town of Delegete was now only ten miles away, and that evening they camped at 149° longitude on the very border of New South Wales.

A fine, penetrating rain had been falling for several hours. All shelter would have been lacking had John Mangles not, by chance, discovered an abandoned and dilapidated sawyer's hut. They had to make do with this miserable hovel of branches and thatch.

Wilson wanted to light a fire to prepare *nardus bread* , and he went to gather some dead wood that lay scattered on the ground. But when it came to igniting this wood, he couldn't manage it. The large quantity of aluminous matter it contained prevented any combustion. This was the incombustible wood that Paganel had mentioned in his strange nomenclature of Australian products.

So they had to do without fire, and consequently without bread, and sleep in damp clothes, while the laughing birds, hidden in the high branches, seemed to mock these unfortunate travelers.

However, Glenarvan was nearing the end of his suffering. It was time. The two young women made heroic efforts, but their strength was waning by the hour. They dragged themselves along; they could no longer walk.

The next day, we set off at dawn. At eleven o'clock, Delegete appeared, in the county of Wellesley, fifty miles from Twofold Bay.

There, means of transport were quickly organized. Feeling so close to the coast, hope returned to Glenarvan's heart. Perhaps, had there been the slightest delay, he would have arrived before the *Duncan!* In twenty-four hours, he would have reached the bay!

At noon, after a comforting meal, all the travelers, seated in a *mail coach* , left Delegete at a gallop on five vigorous horses.

The postilions, spurred on by the promise of a princely hand, drove the swift carriage along a well-maintained road. They wasted no time at the relay stations, which were spaced ten miles apart. It seemed that Glenarvan had instilled in them the fervor that consumed him.

All day long, we ran like this at a rate of six miles per hour, and all night long too.

The next day, at sunrise, a low murmur announced the approach of the Indian Ocean. It was necessary to go around the bay to reach the shore at the thirty-seventh parallel, precisely at the point where Tom Austin was to await the arrival of the travelers.

When the sea appeared, all eyes turned out to sea, searching the expanse. Was the *Duncan* , by some miracle of providence, there,

running from side to side, as it had been a month before, abeam of Cape Corrientes, on the Argentinian coast?

We saw nothing. The sky and the water merged into a single horizon. Not a sail stirred the vast expanse of the ocean.

There was still hope. Perhaps Tom Austin had felt he had to drop anchor in Twofold Bay, because the sea was rough, and a ship could not be safe on such shores.

"To Eden!" said Glenarvan.

Immediately, the *mail coach* turned right onto the circular road that extended along the shores of the bay, and headed towards the small town of Eden, five miles away.

The postilions stopped not far from the fixed light that marks the entrance to the port. A few ships were anchored in the roadstead, but none were flying Malcolm's flag on their masthead.

Glenarvan, John Mangles, and Paganel got out of the car, ran to customs, questioned the employees, and checked the arrivals of the last few days. No ship had entered the bay for a week.

"Hasn't he left!" cried Glenarvan, who, by an easy reversal of fortune in the human heart, no longer wanted to despair. "Perhaps we arrived before him!"

John Mangles shook his head. He knew Tom Austin. His second-in-command would never have delayed the execution of an order by ten days.

"I want to know where I stand," said Glenarvan.

"Certainty is better than doubt!"

Fifteen minutes later, a telegram was sent to the Melbourne *shipbrokers ' syndicate. Then, the travelers were taken to the Victoria Hotel* .

At two o'clock, a telegram was delivered to Lord
Glenarvan. It read as follows:

“Lord Glenarvan, Eden, Twofold Bay.

" *Duncan* left at 18 this month for an unknown destination."

“J Andrew SB”

The telegram fell from Glenarvan's hands.

No doubt about it! The honest Scottish yacht, in the hands of Ben Joyce, had become a pirate ship!

Thus ended this crossing of Australia, begun under such favorable auspices. The traces of Captain Grant and the shipwrecked men seemed to be irrevocably lost; this failure cost the lives of an entire crew; Lord Glenarvan succumbed to the struggle, and this courageous explorer, whom the conspiring elements had been unable to stop in the pampas, had just been defeated by the perversity of men on the Australian continent.

## PART THREE

### Chapter I *The Macquarie*

If Captain Grant's researchers were ever to despair of seeing him again, wasn't it at this moment when they missed everything at once?

Where in the world should we attempt a new expedition? How can we explore new countries?

The *Duncan* no longer existed, and immediate repatriation wasn't even possible. Thus, the undertaking of these generous Scotsmen had failed.

Failure! A sad word that has no echo in a valiant soul, and yet, under the blows of fate, Glenarvan had to recognize his powerlessness to continue this work of devotion.

In this situation, Mary Grant had the courage to never utter her father's name again. She contained her anguish by thinking of the unfortunate crew who had just perished. The daughter stepped aside for the friend, and it was she who consoled Lady Glenarvan, after having received so much comfort herself!

First, she spoke of returning to Scotland. Seeing her so courageous, so resigned, John Mangles admired her.

He wanted to say one last word in support of the captain, but Mary stopped him with a look, and later she said to him:

"No, Mr. John, let us think of those who have given their all. Lord Glenarvan must return to Europe!"

“You’re right, Miss Mary,” replied John Mangles, “it must be done. The English authorities must also be informed of the *Duncan ’s fate* . But don’t give up all hope. Rather than abandon the search we’ve begun, I’ll resume it alone! I’ll find Captain Grant, or I’ll succumb to the task!”

It was a serious commitment that John Mangles was making. Mary accepted it, and she extended her hand toward the young captain's, as if to ratify this treaty. From John Mangles, it was a lifelong devotion; from Mary, an unwavering gratitude.

During that day, the departure was definitively decided. It was resolved to reach Melbourne without delay. The following day, John went to inquire about departing ships. He expected to find frequent connections between Eden and the capital of Victoria.

His expectations were dashed. Ships were scarce.

Three or four ships, anchored in Twofold Bay, comprised the entire local merchant fleet. None were bound for Melbourne, Sydney, or Wales Point. Yet, in these three Australian ports alone, Glenarvan could have found ships carrying cargo to England. Indeed, the *Peninsular Oriental Steam Navigation Company* operated a regular steamship service between these ports and the mother country.

In this situation, what to do? Wait for a ship? One could linger for a long time, as Twofold Bay is rarely frequented. How many vessels pass by and never come ashore!

After reflection and discussion, Glenarvan was about to decide to reach Sydney via the coastal roads, when Paganel made a proposal that no one expected.

The geographer had also visited
Twofold Bay. He knew that transport options were lacking for
Sydney and Melbourne.

But of these three ships anchored in the roadstead, one was preparing to leave for Auckland, the capital of Ikana-Maoui, the North Island of New Zealand.

Paganel then proposed to charter the vessel in question and sail to Auckland, from where it would be easy to return to Europe via the Peninsular Company ships.

This proposal was given serious consideration. Paganel, moreover, did not launch into the series of arguments with which he was usually so prodigal. He simply stated the facts and added that the crossing would not last more than five or six days. The distance between Australia and New Zealand is, in fact, only a thousand miles.

By a singular coincidence, Auckland happened to be located precisely on the 37th parallel, which the researchers had been doggedly following since the Araucanian coast. Certainly, the geographer, without being accused of bias, could have used this fact as an argument in favor of his proposal. It was, in fact, a perfectly natural opportunity to visit the shores of New Zealand.

However, Paganel did not capitalize on this advantage.

After two successive setbacks, he probably didn't want to risk a third interpretation of the document. Besides, what would he have gained from it? It stated peremptorily that a "continent," not an island, had served as Captain Grant's refuge. And New Zealand was just an island. This seemed decisive. In any case, for this reason or any other, Paganel didn't attach any idea of new exploration to this proposal to reach Auckland. He simply noted that regular communications existed between that point and Great Britain, and that it would be easy to take advantage of them.

John Mangles supported Paganel's proposal. He advised its adoption, since they could not wait for the problematic arrival of a ship at Twofold Bay. But, before proceeding, he deemed it appropriate to inspect the vessel reported by the geographer. Glenarvan, the major, Paganel, Robert, and he took a small boat, and, with a few strokes of the oars, they brought alongside the ship anchored two cable lengths from the quay.

It was a 250-ton brig named the *Macquarie* . It sailed along the coast between the various ports of Australia and New Zealand. The captain, or rather, the master, received his visitors quite rudely. They could see that they were dealing with an uneducated man, whose manners were essentially indistinguishable from those of the five sailors on board. A large, red face, thick hands, a flat nose, a gouged-out eye, lips stained by pipe smoke, and a brutish air all contributed to making Will Halley a sorry figure. But there was no choice, and for a voyage of only a few days, one shouldn't look too closely.

"What do you want, you others?" Will Halley asked the strangers who were stepping onto the deck of his ship.

"The captain?" replied John Mangles.

"It's me," said Halley. "And then?"

—Is *Macquarie* in charge for Auckland?

—Yes. And then?

—What is he wearing?

—Everything that's sold and everything that's bought. And then what?

—When is he leaving?

—Tomorrow, at midday tide. After that?

—Would it take passengers?

—It depends on the passengers, and whether they were content with the mess tin provided on board.

—They would bring their own supplies.

-After?

-After?

—Yes. How many are there?

—Nine, including two ladies.

—I don't have any cabins.

—We'll make do with the cabin that will be left at their disposal.

-After?

"Do you accept?" said John Mangles, who was not at all bothered by the captain's manner.

"We'll see," replied the owner of the *Macquarie* .

Will Halley went around once or twice, hitting the bridge with his heavy iron-shod boots, then he came back abruptly towards John Mangles.

"What are we paying for?" he said.

"What are we asking?" replied John.

—Fifty pounds.

Glenarvan nodded in agreement.

"Good! Fifty pounds," replied John Mangles.

—But the passage was completely dry, added Will Halley.

—Completely dry.

—Food on the side.

-Apart.

—Agreed. And then? said Will, holding out his hand.

-Eh?

—The deposit?

"Here is half the price, twenty-five pounds," said John Mangles, counting the sum for the master, who pocketed it without saying thank you.

"Tomorrow on board," he said. "Before noon. Whether we're there or not, I'm drifting."

—We'll be there.

Having answered this, Glenarvan, the major, Robert, Paganel and John Mangles left the ship, without Will Halley even touching the surfer stuck to his red hair.

"What a brute!" said John.

"Well, that suits me," replied Paganel. "He's a real sea dog."

"A real bear!" replied the major.

—And I imagine, added John Mangles, that this bear must have been involved in human flesh trafficking in the past.

“What does it matter!” replied Glenarvan, “as long as he commands the *Macquarie* , and the *Macquarie* goes to New Zealand. From Twofold Bay to Auckland, it will be seen little; after Auckland, it will not be seen at all.”

Lady Helena and Mary Grant were pleased to learn that the departure was set for the following day. Glenarvan pointed out to them that the *Macquarie* was no match for the *Duncan* in terms of comfort. But, after so many hardships, they were not the type to be troubled by such trifles. Mr. Olbinett was asked to take charge of the provisions. The poor man, since the loss of the *Duncan* , had often wept for the unfortunate

*Mistress* Olbinett, who had remained on board and, consequently, along with the entire crew, had fallen victim to the convicts' ferocity. Nevertheless, he carried out his duties as *steward* with his customary zeal, and the "separate provisions" consisted of select items that were never part of the brig's regular fare. Within a few hours, his supplies were in place.

Meanwhile, the major was discounting bills of exchange that Glenarvan held on the *Union Bank* of Melbourne at a money changer. He did not want to be without gold, nor without arms and ammunition; so he replenished his arsenal.

As for Paganel, he obtained an excellent map of
New Zealand, published in Edinburgh by Johnston.

Mulrady was doing well then. He barely felt the effects of the injury that had threatened his life. A few hours at sea should complete his recovery. He planned to heal himself with the Pacific breezes.

Wilson was tasked with arranging the passenger accommodations aboard the *Macquarie* . Under his brush and broom, the cabin was transformed. Will Halley, shrugging his shoulders, let the sailor do as he pleased. He cared little for Glenarvan, his companions, and his shipmates. He didn't even know their names and wasn't concerned. This extra cargo was worth fifty pounds, that was all, and he valued it less than the two hundred tons of tanned hides that filled his hold. Hides first, men second. He was a merchant. As for his seamanship, he was considered quite adept at navigating these seas, made so treacherous by the coral reefs.

During the last hours of that day, Glenarvan wanted to return to that point on the shore intersected by the thirty-seventh parallel. Two reasons drove him to do so.

He wished to revisit the presumed site of the shipwreck. Indeed, Ayrton was almost certainly the quartermaster of the *Britannia* , and the *Britannia* could very well have been lost on that part of the Australian coast; on the east coast if not the west. He couldn't easily abandon a place he was unlikely to ever see again.

And then, failing the *Britannia* , the *Duncan* , at least, had fallen into the hands of the convicts. Perhaps there had been a battle! Why wouldn't traces of a struggle, of a last stand, be found on the shore? If the crew had perished in the waves, wouldn't the waves have cast some bodies ashore?

Glenarvan, accompanied by his faithful John, carried out this reconnaissance. The master of the *Victoria Hotel* provided them with two horses, and they resumed their journey along the northern route that skirts Twofold Bay.

It was a sad exploration. Glenarvan and Captain John rode on without speaking.

But they understood each other. The same thoughts, and therefore the same anxieties, tormented their minds. They gazed at the rocks eroded by the sea. They had no need to question or answer each other.

We can rely on John's zeal and intelligence to affirm that every point of the shoreline was scrupulously explored, the smallest coves carefully

examined, as well as the sloping beaches and sandy plateaus where the Pacific tides, however mediocre, could have cast up a shipwreck.

But no clues were found that would warrant further investigation in the area.

The trace of the shipwreck was still elusive.

As for the *Duncan* , nothing there either. This entire stretch of Australia, bordering the ocean, was deserted.

However, John Mangles discovered clear signs of encampment along the shoreline, remnants of recently lit fires beneath isolated *myalls* . Had a nomadic tribe of natives passed through in the past few days? No, for a clue caught Glenarvan's eye and demonstrated beyond any doubt that convicts had frequented this part of the coast.

The clue was a worn, patched, grey and yellow smock, a grim rag abandoned at the foot of a tree. It bore the prisoner's number from Perth Penitentiary. The convict was no longer there, but his squalid garb spoke for him.

This livery of crime, after having clothed some wretch, finished rotting on this deserted shore.

“You see, John!” said Glenarvan, “the convicts have reached this far! And what about our poor comrades from the *Duncan* ?..”

"Yes!" replied John in a low voice, "it's certain they weren't landed, that they perished..."

"The wretches!" cried Glenarvan. "If they ever fall into my hands, I will avenge my crew!"

The pain had hardened Glenarvan's features.

For a few minutes, the lord gazed at the vastness of the waves, perhaps searching with a final glance for some ship lost in the distance. Then his eyes closed, he became himself again, and, without adding a word or making a gesture, he resumed his journey to Eden at a gallop on his horse.

Only one formality remained: reporting the events that had just transpired to the constable. This was done that very evening to Thomas Banks. The magistrate could barely conceal his satisfaction as he wrote his report. He was simply delighted by the departure of Ben Joyce and his gang. The entire town shared his joy. The convicts had just left Australia, thanks to yet another crime, it was true, but at last they were gone. This important news was immediately telegraphed to the authorities in Melbourne and Sydney.

Having finished his statement, Glenarvan returned to the *Victoria Hotel* .

The travelers spent that last evening in deep sorrow.
Their thoughts wandered over this land so rich in misfortune. They recalled so many hopes, so legitimately conceived at Cape Bernoulli, so cruelly shattered at Twofold Bay!

Paganel, for his part, was in a state of feverish agitation. John Mangles, who had been observing him since the Snowy River incident, sensed that the geographer both wanted to talk and didn't want to. Many times he had pressed him with questions to which the other had not replied.

However, that evening, John, as he walked him back to his room, asked him why he was so nervous.

"My friend John," replied Paganel evasively, "I am no more nervous than usual."

"Mr. Paganel," John continued, "you have a secret that is suffocating you!"

"Well! What can you do?" cried the gesticulating geographer, "I can't help myself!"

—What is stronger than you?

—My joy on one side, my despair on the other.

—Are you both joyful and desperate at the same time?

—Yes, happy and desperate to visit New Zealand.

"Do you have any leads?" John
Mangles asked sharply. "Have you picked up the lost trail?"

“No, my friend John! We *haven’t just returned from New Zealand!* But, nevertheless… Well, you know human nature! All we need to do is breathe to have hope! And my motto is ‘ *spiro, spero* ,’ which is worth more than the finest mottos in the world!”

## Chapter II *The past of the country we are going to*

The following day, January 27th, the passengers of the *Macquarie* were settled aboard the brig's cramped hold. Will Halley had not

offered his cabin to the female travelers. A courtesy hardly regrettable, for the den was fit for a bear.

At half past noon, we set sail with the ebb tide. The anchor came in steeply and was painfully pulled from the bottom. A moderate southwesterly breeze was blowing. The sails were gradually unfurled. The five men on board maneuvered slowly. Wilson wanted to help the crew, but Halley asked him to keep quiet and not interfere in what didn't concern him. He was used to handling himself and didn't ask for help or advice.

This was addressed to John Mangles, who was amused by the clumsiness of some of the maneuvers.

John took it as a given, reserving the right to intervene, in fact if not in law, should the crew's clumsiness compromise the ship's safety.

However, with time and the arms of the five sailors spurred on by the master's curses, the sails were set. The *Macquarie* ran on a broad reach, port tack, under its lower sails, topsails, topgallant sails, brigantine and jibs.

Later, the topsails and the topgallant sails were hoisted. But, despite this reinforcement of canvas, the brig barely moved forward. Its bulging bow, the flared bottom, the heaviness of its stern, made it a poor performer, the perfect example of a "slog."

He had to accept it. Fortunately, and however badly the *Macquarie sailed* , in five days, six at most, it should have reached Auckland harbor.

At seven o'clock in the evening, the coast of Australia and the fixed light of Eden Harbour were lost from sight. The sea, quite rough, was

tiring the ship; it fell heavily into the troughs of the waves. The passengers experienced violent jolts that made their stay in the deckhouse unpleasant.

However, they could not remain on the bridge because the rain was torrential. They were therefore sentenced to a harsh imprisonment.

Each then gave free rein to their thoughts. Little was spoken. Lady Helena and Mary Grant barely exchanged a few words.

Glenarvan couldn't stay still. He paced back and forth, while the major remained motionless.

John Mangles, followed by Robert, would occasionally go up on deck to observe the sea. As for Paganel, he muttered vague and incoherent words to himself in his corner.

What was the worthy geographer thinking about? New Zealand, towards which fate was leading him. He was reliving its entire history in his mind, and the sinister past of this country reappeared before his eyes.

But was there in this story any fact, any incident that would ever have allowed the discoverers of these islands to consider them as a continent?

Could a modern geographer, a sailor, have attributed this name to them? As we can see, Paganel always came back to the interpretation of the document.

It was an obsession, a fixed idea. After Patagonia, after Australia, his imagination, sparked by a single word, focused relentlessly on New

Zealand. But one point, just one, stopped him in his tracks.

" *Contin... Contin...* he repeated... Yet that means continent!"

And he resumed following in his memory the navigators who recognized these two great islands of the southern seas.

It was on December 13, 1642, that the Dutchman Tasman, after discovering Van Diemen's Land, landed on the unknown shores of New Zealand.

He extended along the coast for a few days, and, on the 17th, his ships entered a wide bay which ended in a narrow passage cut between two islands.

The northern island was Ika-Na-Maoui, Zeelandic words meaning "Mauwi's fish." The southern island was Mahai-Pouna-Mou, meaning "the whale that produces green jade."

Abel Tasman sent his canoes ashore, and they returned accompanied by two dugout canoes carrying a noisy crew of natives. These savages were of medium height, brown and yellow-skinned, with protruding bones, harsh voices, and black hair tied on their heads in the Japanese style and topped with a large white plume.

This first meeting between the Europeans and the natives seemed to promise long-lasting friendly relations. But the following day, just as one of Tasman's canoes was about to reconnoiter an anchorage closer to land, seven canoes, manned by a large number of natives, violently attacked it.

The canoe capsized and filled with water.

The quartermaster who commanded it was first struck in the throat with a crudely sharpened pike.

He fell into the sea. Of his six companions, four were killed; the other two and the quartermaster, swimming towards the ships, were able to be picked up and saved.

After this disastrous event, Tasman set sail, limiting his revenge to a few musket shots that probably missed the natives. He left the bay, which has remained known as Slaughter Bay, sailed up the west coast, and on January 5th, anchored near the northern tip. There, not only the violent surf but also the hostile attitude of the natives prevented him from taking on water, and he permanently left these lands, which he named Staten-Land, in honor of the States General.

Indeed, the Dutch navigator imagined that they bordered the islands of the same name discovered east of Tierra del Fuego, at the southern tip of America. He believed he had found "the great southern continent."

"But," Paganel said to himself, "what a seventeenth-century sailor could call a 'continent,' a nineteenth-century sailor could not have called so! Such an error is inadmissible! No! There's something I'm missing!"

For over a century, the discovery of Tasman was forgotten, and New Zealand seemed to have ceased to exist, when a French navigator, Surville, sighted it at 35° 37' latitude. At first, he had no complaints about the natives; but then the winds assailed him with extreme violence, and a storm broke out during which the longboat carrying the expedition's sick was driven onto the shore of Refuge Bay. There, a chief

named Nagui-Nouï warmly received the French and housed them in his own hut. All went well until one of Surville's canoes was stolen.

Surville complained in vain, and felt compelled to punish for this theft a village which he burned to the ground.

A terrible and unjust revenge, which was not unrelated to the bloody reprisals that New Zealand was about to witness.

On October 6, 1769, the illustrious Cook appeared on these shores. He anchored in Taoué-Roa Bay with his ship, the *Endeavour* , and sought to win over the natives with kind treatment. But to treat people well, one must first capture them. Cook did not hesitate to take two or three prisoners and impose his benevolence upon them by force. These men, showered with gifts and affection, were then sent ashore. Soon, several natives, captivated by their stories, came aboard voluntarily and traded with the Europeans. A few days later, Cook sailed towards Hawke's Bay, a vast inlet in the east coast of the northern island. There he found himself in the presence of belligerent, boisterous, and provocative natives. Their displays went so far that it became necessary to subdue them with a burst of grapeshot.

On October 20, the *Endeavour* anchored in Toko-Malou Bay, home to a peaceful population of two hundred souls. The ship's botanists made fruitful explorations in the country, and the natives transported them ashore in their own canoes. Cook visited two villages defended by palisades, parapets, and double ditches, which indicated a serious knowledge of fortification. The larger of these forts was situated on a rock that, at high tide, made into a veritable island; more than an island, even, for not only did the waters surround it, but they roared through a

natural arch, sixty feet high, upon which rested this inaccessible "pah." On March 31, after having gathered a rich harvest of curiosities, native plants, and ethnographic and ethnological material over five months, Cook gave his name to the strait separating the two islands and left New Zealand. He was to return to it on his later voyages.

Indeed, in 1773, the great sailor reappeared in Hawke's Bay and witnessed scenes of cannibalism. Here, his companions are to blame for having provoked them. Officers, having found the mutilated limbs of a young Native American ashore, brought them back on board, "cooked" them, and offered them to the natives, who devoured them voraciously. A sad fantasy indeed, to become the cooks of a meal for cannibals!

During his third voyage, Cook again visited these lands, which he was particularly fond of, and whose hydrographic survey he was keen to complete. He left them for the last time on February 25, 1777.

In 1791, Vancouver made a twenty-day stopover at Dark Bay, without any benefit to the natural or geographical sciences. D'Entrecasteaux, in 1793, surveyed twenty-five miles of coastline in the northern part of Ikana-Maoui. The merchant marine captains Hausen and Dalrympe, then Baden, Richardson, and Moodi, made a brief appearance there, and Dr. Savage, during a five-week stay, collected interesting details about the customs of the New Zealanders.

It was in that same year, 1805, that the nephew of the chief of Rangui-Hou, the intelligent Doua-Tara, embarked on the ship Argo , anchored in the Bay of Islands and commanded by Captain Baden.

Perhaps the adventures of Doua-Tara will provide a subject for an epic poem by some Maori Homer. They were rife with disasters, injustices,

and mistreatment.

Lack of faith, confinement, beatings, and injuries—this is what the poor savage received in exchange for his good services. What an idea he must have formed of people who call themselves civilized! He was taken to London. He was made a sailor of the lowest class, the scapegoat of the crews. Without Reverend Marsden, he would have died from the hardship. This missionary took an interest in the young savage, recognizing in him sound judgment, a brave character, and marvelous qualities of gentleness, grace, and affability. Marsden obtained for his protégé a few sacks of wheat and farming implements intended for his country. This small amount was stolen from him. Misfortunes and suffering once again overwhelmed poor Doua-Tara until 1814, when he was finally found restored in the land of his ancestors. He was about to reap the rewards of so many trials, when death struck him down at the age of twenty-eight, just as he was preparing to regenerate bloodthirsty Zeeland. Civilization was undoubtedly delayed for many years by this irreparable misfortune. Nothing can replace an intelligent and good man who unites in his heart the love of good with the love of country!

Until 1816, New Zealand was neglected. At that time, Thompson, in 1817, Lidiard Nicholas, in 1819, Marsden, travelled through various parts of the two islands, and, in 1820, Richard Cruise, captain in the eighty-fourth infantry regiment, made a ten-month stay there which provided science with serious studies on native customs.

In 1824, Duperrey, commanding the *Coquille* , stopped at the Bay of Islands for fifteen days, and had nothing but praise for the natives.

Following him, in 1827, the English whaling ship *Mercury* had to defend itself against plunder and murder. That same year, Captain Dillon was received with the utmost hospitality during two port calls.

In March 1827, the commander of the *Astrolabe* , the illustrious Dumont-d'Urville, was able to spend a few nights ashore with impunity and without weapons among the natives, exchange gifts and songs, sleep in the huts, and continue, without being disturbed, his interesting survey work, which earned such beautiful maps for the naval depot.

On the contrary, the following year, the English brig *Hawes* , commanded by John James, after stopping at the Bay of Islands, headed towards the eastern cape, and suffered greatly at the hands of a treacherous chieftain named Enararo. Several of his companions met a terrible death.

From these contradictory events, these alternations of gentleness and barbarity, we must conclude that all too often the cruelties of the New Zealanders were merely acts of retaliation. Good or bad treatment depended on the good or bad captains. There were certainly some unjustified attacks by the natives, but above all, acts of vengeance provoked by the Europeans; unfortunately, the punishment fell on those who did not deserve it. After d'Urville, the ethnography of New Zealand was completed by a daring explorer who, twenty times over, traveled the world, a nomad, a bohemian of science, an Englishman, Earle. He visited the unknown parts of both islands, without having any personal complaints about the natives, but he often witnessed scenes of cannibalism. The New Zealanders devoured each other with a repugnant sensuality.

This is also what Captain Laplace acknowledged in 1831, during his stopover in the Bay of Islands. The fighting was already far more formidable, for the Indigenous people wielded firearms with remarkable accuracy. Thus, the once flourishing lands, populated by the Ika-Na-Maoui, were transformed into profound desolations. Entire tribes had vanished like flocks of sheep, roasted and eaten.

The missionaries struggled in vain to overcome these bloodthirsty instincts. As early as 1808, *the Church Missionary Society* had sent its most capable agents—and that is the appropriate name for them—to the principal stations on the North Island. But the barbarity of the New Zealanders forced it to suspend the establishment of missions. Only in 1814 did Messrs. Marsden, the protector of Doua-Tara, Hall, and King land at the Bay of Islands and purchase two hundred acres of land from the chiefs for twelve iron axes. There, the headquarters of the Anglican Society was established.

The beginnings were difficult. But eventually, the natives respected the lives of the missionaries. They accepted their care and their teachings. Some of the fierce natives softened. A sense of gratitude awakened in these hardened hearts. It even happened in 1824 that the Zeelanders protected their "arikis," that is, the reverends, from savage sailors who insulted them and threatened them with ill-treatment.

Thus, over time, the missions prospered, despite the presence of convicts who had escaped from Port Jackson and demoralized the native population. In 1831, the *journal of the evangelical missions* reported two sizable settlements, one at Kidi-Kidi, on the banks of a canal leading to the sea in the Bay of Islands, and the other at Pai-Hia, on the banks of the Kawa-Kawa River. The natives converted to

Christianity had built roads under the guidance of the *arikis* , forged routes through the vast forests, and constructed bridges over the streams. Each missionary in turn went to preach the civilizing religion in the remote tribes, erecting chapels of rushes or bark, schools for young natives, and on the roof of these modest constructions was displayed the mission pavilion, bearing the cross of Christ and these words: "rongo-pai", that is to say "the gospel", in the New Zealand language.

Unfortunately, the influence of the missionaries did not extend beyond their settlements.

The nomadic segment of the population remains untouched by their influence. Cannibalism is eradicated only among Christians, and even then, these new converts must not be subjected to excessive temptations. Their bloodlust stirs within them.

Moreover, war still exists in a chronic form in these wild lands. The Zeelanders are not mindless Australians fleeing before a European invasion; they resist, they defend themselves, they hate their invaders, and an incurable hatred currently drives them against the English immigrants. The future of these great islands hangs by a thread. They will either face immediate civilization or centuries of profound barbarity, depending on the vagaries of war.

Thus Paganel, his brain boiling with impatience, had reconstructed the history of New Zealand in his mind. But nothing in this history allowed him to call this land composed of two islands a "continent," and although a few words in the document had sparked his imagination,

those two syllables " *contin"* stubbornly stopped him in his tracks, preventing him from pursuing a new interpretation.

## Chapter III *The Massacres of New Zealand*

On January 31st, four days after its departure, the *Macquarie* had not yet crossed two-thirds of the ocean narrowed between Australia and New Zealand. Will Halley paid little attention to the ship's maneuvers; he let things take their course. He was rarely seen, which no one thought to complain about. No one would have found fault with him spending all his time in his cabin, had the boorish master not gotten drunk every day on gin or brandy. His sailors readily followed suit, and never did a ship sail more by the grace of God than the *Macquarie* of Twofold Bay.

This unforgivable negligence forced John Mangles to maintain constant vigilance. Mulrady and Wilson righted the helm more than once just as some sudden lurch threatened to capsize the brig. Will Halley often intervened, berating the two sailors with a string of curses. These men, lacking stamina, were itching to haul in the drunkard and drag him down into the hold for the rest of the voyage. But John Mangles would stop them and, with some difficulty, calm their righteous indignation.

However, the ship's situation worried him; but, so as
not to alarm Glenarvan, he only spoke of it to the major and Paganel.
Mac Nabbs gave him, in other words, the same advice as
Mulrady and Wilson.

"If this measure seems useful to you, John," said Mac Nabbs, "you should not hesitate to take command, or, if you prefer, the ship's helm. This drunkard, after putting us ashore at Auckland, will regain control of his vessel, and he will capsize, if that is his pleasure."

“No doubt, Mr. Mac Nabbs,” replied John, “and I will do it, if absolutely necessary. As long as we are at sea, a little watch is sufficient; my sailors and I do not leave the deck. But, as we approach the coast, if this Will Hallay does not regain his senses, I confess I will be in a great predicament.”

"Can't you give directions?" asked Paganel.

"That will be difficult," replied John. "Do you think there isn't a nautical chart on board!"

-In truth?

—In truth. The *Macquarie* only does coastal shipping between Eden and Auckland, and this Will Halley is so used to these parts that he doesn't take any bearings.

"He probably imagines," replied Paganel, "that his ship knows the way, and that it steers itself."

—Oh! Oh! resumed John Mangles, I don't believe in self-steering ships, and if Will Halley is drunk on the landings, he will put us in extreme embarrassment.

—Let us hope, said Paganel, that he will have recovered his reason in the vicinity of the earth.

—So, asked Mac Nabbs, if necessary, you could not drive the *Macquarie* to Auckland?

"Without a chart of this part of the coast, it's impossible. The reefs are extremely dangerous. It's a series of small, irregular, and capricious fjords, like the fjords of Norway. The reefs are numerous, and it takes considerable experience to avoid them. A ship, however sturdy, would be lost if its keel struck one of these rocks submerged just a few feet below the surface."

"And in that case," said the major, "the crew has no other option but to take refuge on the coast?"

—Yes, Mr. Mac Nabbs, if time permits.

"A dire situation!" replied Paganel, "for the coasts of New Zealand are not hospitable, and the dangers are as great beyond as within the shores!"

"Are you talking about the Maori, Mr. Paganel?" asked John Mangles.

—Yes, my friend. Their reputation is well established in the Indian Ocean. We are not talking about timid or stupid Australians, but rather an intelligent and bloodthirsty race, cannibals fond of human flesh, anthropophages from whom no pity should be expected.

"So," said the major, "if Captain Grant had been shipwrecked on the coasts of New Zealand, you would not advise setting out to search for him?"

*Britannia* might perhaps be found , but inland, no, for it would be pointless. Any European who ventures into those treacherous lands

falls into the hands of the Maori, and any prisoner in the hands of the Maori is lost. I have urged my friends to cross the pampas, to traverse Australia, but I would never lead them down the paths of New Zealand. May the hand of heaven guide us, may God grant that we never fall into the hands of those ferocious natives!”

Paganel's fears were all too justified. New Zealand has a terrible reputation, and a bloody date can be placed on every incident that has marked its discovery.

The list of victims inscribed in the martyrology of sailors is long. It was Abel Tasman who, with his five sailors killed and devoured, began these bloody annals of cannibalism. After him, Captain Tukney and his entire crew of fishing boats suffered the same fate. Near the eastern part of the Foveaux Strait, five fishermen from the *Sydney Cove* also met their end at the hands of natives. We must also mention four men from the schooner *Brothers* , murdered at Molineux Harbour, several soldiers of General Gates, and three deserters from the *Mathilda* , before arriving at the infamous name of Captain Marion Du Frène.

On May 11, 1772, after Cook's first voyage, the French captain Marion anchored in the Bay of Islands with his ship, the *Mascarin* , and the *Castries* , commanded by Captain Crozet. The hypocritical New Zealanders gave the newcomers an excellent welcome. They were even timid at times, and it took gifts, good services, daily fraternization, and a long-standing relationship to acclimate them on board.

Their leader, the intelligent Takouri, belonged, if we are to believe Dumont-d'Urville, to the Wangaroa tribe, and he was related to the

natural one treacherously taken by Surville, two years before the arrival of Captain Marion.

In a land where honor dictates that every Maori must seek redress through bloodshed for wrongs suffered, Takouri could not forget the insult to his tribe. He patiently awaited the arrival of a European ship, plotted his revenge, and carried it out with chilling composure.

After feigning fear of the French, Takouri spared no effort to lull them into a false sense of security. He and his companions often spent the night aboard the ships. They brought along choice fish. Their daughters and wives accompanied them. They soon learned the officers' names and invited them to visit their villages. Marion and Crozet, charmed by such overtures, thus traveled along this entire coastline, inhabited by four thousand people. The locals rushed to meet them unarmed and sought to inspire their complete trust.

Captain Marion, while putting in at the Bay of Islands, intended to replace the masts of the *Castries* , which had been badly damaged by recent storms. He therefore explored the interior, and, on May 23, he found a magnificent cedar forest two leagues from the shore, and within reach of a bay located one league from the ships.

There, a settlement was established where two-thirds of the crews, equipped with axes and other tools, worked to cut down trees and repair the roads leading to the bay. Two other posts were chosen: one on the small island of Motou-Aro, in the middle of the harbor, where the expedition's sick, blacksmiths, and coopers from the ships were taken; the other on the mainland, at the ocean's edge, a league and a half from the vessels; this latter post communicated with the carpenters' camp.

At all these posts, strong and helpful natives assisted the sailors in their various tasks.

However, Captain Marion had not refrained from certain precautionary measures until then.

The savages never boarded it armed, and the longboats only went ashore well-armed.

But Marion and the most skeptical of his officers were blinded by the natives' behavior, and the commander ordered the canoes to be disarmed. However, Captain Crozet tried to persuade Marion to rescind this order. He did not succeed.

So, the attention and devotion of the New Zealanders redoubled. Their leaders and officers lived in perfect intimacy.

Many times, Takouri brought his son on board and let him sleep in the cabins. On June 8, during a solemn visit he made ashore, Marion was recognized as the "great chief" of the entire country, and four white feathers adorned his hair as honorary symbols.

Thirty-three days passed since the ships' arrival at the Bay of Islands. The rigging work progressed; the water tanks were being filled at the Motou-Aro spring. Captain Crozet personally directed the carpenters' station, and never were hopes more justified for seeing an undertaking brought to a successful conclusion.

On June 12 at two o'clock, the commander's boat was ready for a fishing trip planned at the foot of the village of Takouri. Marion embarked with the two young officers Vaudricourt and Lehoux, a volunteer, the master-at-arms and twelve sailors.

Takouri and five other chiefs accompanied him. Nothing could have foreshadowed the terrible catastrophe that awaited sixteen out of seventeen Europeans.

The canoe overran, sped towards the land, and was soon lost from sight of the two ships.

That evening, Captain Marion did not return to sleep on board. No one was worried about his absence. It was assumed that he had wanted to visit the mast-building workshop and spend the night there.

The next day, at five o'clock, the *Castries ' longboat* went, as usual, to take on water at the island of Motou-Aro. It returned to the ship without incident.

At nine o'clock, the watchman of the *Mascarin* spotted a nearly exhausted man swimming towards the ships at sea. A lifeboat went to his aid and brought him back on board.

It was Turner, one of Captain Marion's longboatmen. He had a wound in his side caused by two spear blows, and he was returning alone of the seventeen men who had left the ship the day before.

He was questioned, and soon all the details of this horrible tragedy were known.

The unfortunate Marion's canoe had reached the village at seven o'clock in the morning. The natives cheerfully came to meet the visitors. They carried on their shoulders the officers and sailors who did not want to get wet while disembarking. Then, the French separated from one another.

Immediately, the savages, armed with spears, clubs, and bludgeons, rushed them, ten against one, and massacred them. Sailor Turner, struck twice by a spear, managed to escape his enemies and hide in some bushes. From there, he witnessed abominable scenes. The savages stripped the dead of their clothes, opened their bellies, and hacked them to pieces…

At that moment, Turner, without being seen, threw himself into the sea, and was picked up dying by the *Mascarin 's boat* .

This event horrified both crews. A cry for vengeance erupted. But before avenging the dead, the living had to be saved. There were three outposts on land, surrounded by thousands of bloodthirsty savages, ravenous cannibals.

In the absence of Captain Crozet, who had spent the night at the rigging yard, Duclesmeur, the ship's first officer, took emergency measures. The *Mascarin 's longboat* was dispatched with an officer and a detachment of soldiers. This officer's primary mission was to assist the carpenters. He set out, sailed along the coast, spotted Commander Marion's boat aground, and went ashore.

Captain Crozet, absent from the ship as previously mentioned, knew nothing of the massacre when, around two o'clock in the afternoon, he saw the detachment appear. He sensed impending doom. He went forward and learned the truth. He was forbidden to inform his companions, whom he did not want to demoralize.

The savages, gathered in troops, occupied all the heights. Captain Crozet had the main tools removed, buried the rest, burned his sheds and began his retreat with sixty men.

The natives followed him, shouting: " *Takouri mate Marion!* ", hoping to frighten the sailors by revealing the death of their leaders.

Enraged, they tried to rush upon these wretches. Captain Crozet could barely restrain them. Two leagues were covered.

The detachment reached the shore and embarked in the longboats with the men from the second post.

All this time, a thousand savages sat motionless on the ground. But when the boats put to sea, the stones began to fly.

Immediately, four sailors, good shots, successively shot down all the leaders, to the great astonishment of the natives, who did not know the effect of firearms.

Captain Crozet reached the *Mascarin* , and he immediately dispatched the longboat to Motou-Aro Island.

A detachment of soldiers settled on the island to spend the night, and the sick were brought back on board.

The next day, a second detachment arrived to reinforce the post. The island needed to be cleared of the natives who infested it, and the water tanks needed to be filled again. The village of Motou-Aro had three hundred inhabitants. The French attacked it. Six chiefs were killed, the rest of the natives were bayoneted, and the village was burned. However, the *Castries* could not put to sea again without masts, and Crozet, forced to abandon the trees in the cedar forest, had to make makeshift masts. The water-raising work continued.

A month passed. The savages made several attempts to retake Motou-Aro Island, but without success. When their canoes came within range of the ships, they were cut down by cannon fire.

Finally, the work was completed. It remained to be seen whether any of the sixteen victims had survived the massacre, and to avenge the others. The longboat, carrying a large detachment of officers and soldiers, sailed to the village of Takouri. Upon its approach, this treacherous and cowardly chief fled, carrying Commander Marion's cloak over his shoulders. The huts in his village were thoroughly searched. In his hut, they found the skull of a man who had recently been cooked. The imprint of the cannibal's teeth was still visible.

A human thigh was impaled on a wooden stick. A shirt with a bloodied collar was identified as Marion's, followed by the clothes, the pistols of young Vaudricourt, the weapons from the canoe, and tattered belongings. Further on, in another village, human entrails were found, cleaned and cooked.

This irrefutable evidence of murder and cannibalism was collected, and the human remains were respectfully buried; then the villages of Takouri and Piki-Ore, his accomplice, were burned to the ground. On July 14, 1772, the two ships departed from these grim waters.

Such was this catastrophe, the memory of which should be fresh in the mind of every traveler who sets foot on the shores of New Zealand. He is an imprudent captain who does not heed these lessons. New Zealanders are always treacherous and cannibalistic. Cook, in turn, recognized this well during his second voyage in 1773.

Indeed, the longboat of one of his ships, the *Aventure* , commanded by Captain Furneaux, having gone ashore on December 17th to search for a supply of wild herbs, never reappeared. A midshipman and nine men were aboard. Captain Furneaux, worried, sent Lieutenant Burney to search for it. Burney, arriving at the landing site, found, he said, "a scene of carnage and barbarity which cannot be described without horror; the heads, entrails, and lungs of several of our men lay scattered on the sand, and, nearby, some dogs were still devouring other remains of this kind."

To complete this bloody list, we must add the ship *Brothers* , attacked in 1815 by the New Zealanders, and the entire crew of the *Boyd* , Captain Thompson, massacred in 1820. Finally, on March 1, 1829, at Walkitaa, Chief Enararo plundered the English brig *Hawes* , from Sydney; his horde of cannibals massacred several sailors, cooked the corpses and devoured them.

Such was the country of New Zealand towards which the *Macquarie was sailing* , manned by a stupid crew, under the command of a drunkard.

## Chapter IV *The Breakers*

However, this arduous journey continued.

On February 2nd, six days after its departure, the *Macquarie* had still not sighted the shores of Auckland. The wind was favorable, however, and remained from the southwest; but the currents thwarted it, and the brig barely managed to spread out. The rough, choppy sea strained its upper rigging; its frames creaked, and it struggled to right itself from

the troughs of the waves. Its shrouds, backstays, and poorly reinforced stays allowed play in the masts, which were shaken by violent jolts with every roll.

Very fortunately, Will Halley, being a man of little haste, did not force his sails, for the entire mast would have inevitably come down.

John Mangles therefore hoped that this nasty carcass would reach the port without further mishap, but he suffered to see his companions so poorly settled on board this brig.

Neither Lady Helena nor Mary Grant complained, however, although the continuous rain forced them to remain in the coachroof. There, the lack of air and the ship's rolling greatly uncomfortable them. So they often came out onto the deck to brave the inclement weather until unbearable gusts of wind forced them back down.

They would then enter this narrow space, more suitable for housing goods than passengers, and especially female passengers.

So, their friends tried to distract them.

Paganel tried to kill time with his stories, but he had little success. Indeed, minds, lost on this return journey, were demoralized. As much as the geographer's dissertations on the pampas or Australia had once interested people, his reflections and insights about New Zealand left them indifferent and cold.

Moreover, they sailed toward that new land of sinister memory without enthusiasm, without conviction, not willingly, but under the pressure of fate. Of all the passengers on the *Macquarie* , Lord Glenarvan was the most to be pitied. He was rarely seen in the galley.

He couldn't stay still. His nervous, overexcited nature did not tolerate confinement between four narrow partitions. Day and night, heedless of torrential rain and crashing waves, he remained on deck, sometimes leaning on the rail, sometimes pacing with feverish restlessness. His eyes constantly scanned the horizon.

During the brief breaks in the clouds, his telescope scanned him relentlessly. He seemed to question the silent waves. He longed to tear away the mist that veiled the horizon, the accumulating vapors, with a single gesture. He could not resign himself to it, and his face reflected a bitter sorrow. This was the energetic man, until then happy and powerful, who suddenly lacked both power and happiness.

John Mangles never left his side and endured the harsh weather at his side. That day, Glenarvan, wherever a break in the mist appeared, scanned the horizon with even more tenacious determination. John approached him:

"Is your honor seeking the land?" he asked him.

Glenarvan shook his head.

"However," the young captain continued, "you must be eager to leave this brig. We should have known about Auckland's lights for the past thirty-six hours."

Glenarvan did not respond. He kept looking, and for a minute his telescope remained trained on the horizon upwind of the ship.

"The land is not on this side," said John Mangles. "Your honor should look rather to starboard."

"Why, John?" replied Glenarvan. "This is not the land I seek!"

—What do you want, *my lord* ?

"My yacht! My *Duncan* !" Glenarvan replied angrily. "He must be there, in those parts, scouring those seas, practicing that sinister pirate trade! He's there, I tell you, there, John, on that shipping route between Australia and New Zealand! And I have a feeling we'll meet him!"

—God preserve us from this encounter, *my lord* !

—Why, John?

—Your Honor forgets our situation! What would we do on that brig if the *Duncan* gave chase? We wouldn't even be able to flee!

—Run away, John?

“Yes, *my lord* ! We would try it in vain! We would be captured, delivered into the mercy of those wretches, and Ben Joyce has shown that he doesn't shrink from a crime. I don't give our lives much thought! We would defend ourselves to the death! So be it! But then what? Think of Lady Glenarvan, *my lord* , think of Mary Grant!”

"Poor women!" Glenarvan murmured. "John, my heart is broken, and sometimes I feel despair overwhelm me. It seems to me that new catastrophes await us, that heaven has turned against us! I am afraid!"

—You, *my lord* ?

—Not for me, John, but for those I love, for those you love too!

“Rest assured, *my lord* ,” replied the young captain. “There is no need to fear! The *Macquarie* is sailing poorly, but it is sailing. Will Halley is a fool, but I am here, and if the approaches to land seem dangerous, I will steer the ship back out to sea. So, from that quarter, there is little or no danger. But as for coming alongside the *Duncan* , heaven forbid, and if your honor seeks to catch sight of her, let it be to avoid her, let it be to flee from her!”

John Mangles was right. The encounter with the *Duncan* would have been disastrous for the *Macquarie* .

However, this encounter was to be feared in these narrow seas that pirates could scour with impunity. Yet, on that day at least, the yacht did not appear, and the sixth night since leaving Twofold Bay arrived without John Mangles' fears being realized.

But that night was to be terrible. Darkness fell almost suddenly at seven o'clock in the evening.

The sky was very threatening. The sailor's instinct, superior to the stupor of drunkenness, took hold of Will Halley. He left his cabin, rubbing his eyes, shaking his large red head.

Then he took a deep breath, as another might have swallowed a large glass of water to recover, and he examined the rigging. The wind was freshening, and, veering a quarter to the west, it was blowing directly towards the Zeeland coast.

Will Halley called his men with a string of curses, ordered the topsails to be secured, and set the night sails. John Mangles approved without a word.

He had given up on speaking with that rude sailor. But neither Glenarvan nor he left the deck. Two hours later, a strong breeze arose.

Will Halley reefed the lower sail in his topsails. The maneuver would have been difficult for five men if the *Macquarie* hadn't carried a double yard of the American system. Indeed, it was enough to bring down the upper yard for the topsail to be reduced to its smaller size.

Two hours passed. The sea was rising. The *Macquarie* was experiencing such violent jolts in its bilge that it seemed its keel was scraping against rocks. This was not the case, however, but the heavy hull struggled to rise into the waves. Consequently, the backwash of the waves was taking on considerable masses of water. The lifeboat, suspended from the portside railings, disappeared in a sudden surge.

John Mangles was understandably worried. Any other vessel would have easily handled these relatively harmless waves. But with this heavy ship, there was a real risk of sinking, as the deck filled with water at every dip, and the slick, unable to drain quickly enough through the scuppers, could have submerged the vessel. It would have been wise, to avoid any eventuality, to break the bulwarks with an axe to facilitate the ship's escape.

But Will Halley refused to take this precaution. Besides, a greater danger threatened the *Macquarie* , and, no doubt, it was too late to warn him.

Around 11:30, John Mangles and Wilson, who were standing on the leeward side of the boat, were struck by an unusual noise. Their seafaring instincts were awakened. John grabbed the sailor's hand.

"The surf!" he told him.

"Yes," replied Wilson. "The blade breaks on benches."

—At most two cable lengths?

"At most! The earth is there!"

John leaned over the railings, looked at the dark waves and cried out: the sounding line! Wilson! The sounding line!

The master, stationed at the front, seemed unaware of his position. Wilson grabbed the sounding line coiled in its locker and launched himself into the foremast shrouds.

He threw the lead; the rope slipped through his fingers. At the third knot, the lead stopped.

"Three strokes!" Wilson shouted.

"Captain," said John, running to Will Halley, "we're on the breakers."

Whether or not he saw Halley shrug was irrelevant. But he rushed to the helm, put the tiller underneath, while Wilson, dropping the sounding line, hauled on the topsail arms to bring the ship upwind. The steered sailor, vigorously pushed back, had no clue what had happened with this sudden attack.

"To the wind's arms! Cast off! Cast off!" shouted the young captain as he maneuvered to rise above the reefs.

For half a minute, the starboard hip of the brig extended them, and, despite the darkness of the night, John saw a roaring line whitening

four fathoms from the ship.

At that moment, Will Halley, aware of this imminent danger, was losing his mind. His sailors, barely sober, couldn't understand his orders. Moreover, the incoherence of his words, the contradiction in his commands, showed that this stupid drunkard lacked composure.

He was surprised by the proximity of land, which was still eight miles downwind, when he had thought it was thirty or forty miles away. The currents had thrown him off his usual course and taken this miserable old sailor by surprise.

However, John Mangles' prompt maneuver had just moved the *Macquarie away* from the breakers.

But John didn't know his position. Perhaps he was trapped in a belt of reefs.

The wind was blowing straight east, and with every pitch, we could touch down.

Soon, indeed, the sound of the surf intensified on the starboard bow. They had to luff again. John brought the helm down and heaved to windward. Breakers multiplied beneath the brig's bow, and it became necessary to tack to the wind to regain open waters. Would this maneuver succeed with a poorly balanced vessel under reduced sail?

It was uncertain, but it had to be tried.

"The bar below, all the way!" John Mangles shouted to Wilson.

The *Macquarie* began to approach the new reef line. Soon, the sea foamed at the impact of the submerged rocks.

It was an indescribable moment of anguish. The foam made the waves glow. It was as if a phosphorescent phenomenon had suddenly illuminated them. The sea roared, as if it possessed the voice of those ancient reefs animated by pagan mythology. Wilson and Mulrady, bent over the helm, were putting all their weight on it. The tiller was about to touch.

Suddenly, there was a jolt. The *Macquarie* had struck a rock. The bowsprit's bobstays broke, compromising the stability of the foremast. Would the tack be completed without further damage?

No, for a sudden lull occurred, and the ship turned back to leeward. Its course was abruptly halted. A high wave caught it beneath, carried it further onto the reefs, and it fell back with extreme violence. The foremast came crashing down with all its rigging. The brig struck the ground twice and remained motionless, listing to starboard at a thirty-degree angle.

The hatch windows had shattered. The passengers rushed outside. But waves were sweeping across the deck from one end to the other, and they could not stand there safely. John Mangles, knowing the ship was firmly embedded in the sand, urged them to return to the deckhouse.

"The truth, John?" Glenarvan asked coldly.

"The truth, *my lord* ," replied John Mangles, "is that we will not sink. As for being wrecked by the sea, that is another matter, but we have time to consider that."

—Is it midnight?

—Yes, *my lord* , and we must wait for daylight.

—Can't we put the canoe in the sea?

—With this swell, and in this darkness, it's impossible! And besides, where could we reach land?

"Well, John, let's stay here until daybreak."

However, Will Halley was running like a madman on the deck of his brig. His sailors, recovering from their shock, broke open a barrel of brandy and began to drink. John foresaw that their drunkenness would soon lead to terrible scenes. The captain couldn't be counted on to restrain them. The wretch was tearing his hair out and wringing his arms. He thought only of his cargo, which wasn't insured.

"I'm ruined! I'm lost!" he cried, running from one side to the other.

John Mangles had little thought of consoling him. He armed his companions, and all stood ready to repel the sailors who were gorging themselves on brandy, uttering dreadful blasphemies.

"The first one of these wretches who approaches the barracks," said the major calmly, "I'll kill him like a dog."

The sailors must have seen that the passengers were determined to keep them in check, because after a few attempts at looting, they disappeared. John Mangles paid no further attention to these drunkards and impatiently awaited daylight.

The ship was now completely motionless. The sea was gradually calming. The wind was dying down. The hull could therefore hold for a few more hours. At sunrise, John would survey the land. If it presented

an easy landing, the dinghy, now the only boat on board, would be used to transport the crew and passengers. It would take at least three trips, as there was only room for four people. As for the boat, it had been seen that it had been swept away in a storm.

While pondering the dangers of his situation, John Mangles, leaning against the hood, listened to the sounds of the surf. He tried to pierce the deep darkness. He wondered how far away that coveted and dreaded land lay. Breakers often extend several leagues from the coast. Could the frail canoe withstand a long crossing?

While John pondered this, praying for a little light from the dark sky, the female passengers, trusting his words, rested on their bunks. The brig's stillness assured them a few hours of tranquility. Glenarvan, John, and their companions, no longer hearing the shouts of the drunken crew, also fell into a quick sleep, and, at one o'clock in the morning, a profound silence reigned aboard the brig, itself asleep on its bed of sand.

Around four o'clock, the first light appeared in the east. The clouds softened slightly in the pale glow of dawn. John went back up on deck. A curtain of mist hung on the horizon. A few indistinct shapes floated in the morning vapors, but at a certain height. A slight swell still stirred the sea, and the open waters were lost amidst thick, motionless clouds.

John waited. The light gradually increased, the horizon tinged with red. The curtain slowly rose on the vast scene at the bottom. Black reefs jutted out of the water. Then, a line appeared on a band of foam, a point of light ignited like a beacon atop a peak projected onto the still-

invisible disk of the rising sun. Land was there, less than nine miles away.

"The land!" cried John Mangles.

His companions, awakened by his voice, rushed onto the deck of the brig and silently gazed at the coastline looming on the horizon. Whether hospitable or ominous, it was to be their place of refuge.

"Where is Will Halley?" asked Glenarvan.

"I don't know, *my lord* ," replied John Mangles.

—And his sailors?

—Disappeared like him.

—And, like him, dead drunk, no doubt, added Mac Nabbs.

"Let them be found!" said Glenarvan, "we cannot abandon them on this ship."

Mulrady and Wilson went down to the forecastle quarters, and two minutes later returned. The station was empty. They then searched the orlop deck and the brig down to the hold. They found neither Will Halley nor his sailors.

"What! Nobody?" said Glenarvan.

"Did they fall into the sea?" asked Paganel.

"Anything is possible," replied John Mangles, very concerned about this disappearance.

Then, moving towards the back:

"To the canoe," he said.

Wilson and Mulrady followed him to put the dinghy into the sea. The dinghy had disappeared.

## Chapter V *The Improvised Sailors*

Will Halley and his crew, taking advantage of the night and the passengers' sleep, had escaped in the brig's only lifeboat. There was no doubt about it. This captain, whose duty compelled him to be the last on board, had been the first to leave.

"Those scoundrels have fled," said John Mangles. "Well! So much the better, *my lord* . That's a lot of unpleasant scenes they've spared us!"

“I think so,” replied Glenarvan; “besides, there’s always a captain on board, John, and brave, if not skilled, sailors, your companions. Give the command, and we’re ready to obey you.”

The major, Paganel, Robert, Wilson, Mulrady, Olbinett himself, applauded Glenarvan's words, and, lined up on the deck, they stood at John Mangles' disposal.

"What should be done?" asked Glenarvan.

The young captain cast his gaze across the sea, observed the incomplete rigging of the brig, and said, after a few moments of reflection:

"We have two ways, *my lord* , of getting out of this situation: raise the ship and put back to sea, or reach the coast on a raft that will be easy to build.

"If the building can be rebuilt, let's rebuild it," replied Glenarvan. "That's the best course of action, isn't it?"

—Yes, Your Honor, for once on land, what would become of us without means of transport?

"Let's avoid the coast," added Paganel. "We must be wary of New Zealand."

“Especially since we’ve drifted quite a bit,” John continued. “Halley’s carelessness has thrown us back south, that’s obvious. At noon, I’ll take my position, and if, as I suspect, we’re south of Auckland, I’ll try to head back up the coast with the *Macquarie* .”

"But what about the damage to the brig?" asked Lady Helena.

“I don’t think they’re serious, madam,” replied John Mangles. “I’ll rig a makeshift mast forward to replace the foremast, and we’ll make progress—slowly, it’s true, but we’ll get where we want to go. If, unfortunately, the brig’s hull is damaged, or if it can’t be refloated, we’ll have no choice but to reach the coast and make our way overland back to Auckland.”

"Let's see the condition of the ship," said the major. "That's the most important thing."

Glenarvan, John, and Mulrady opened the large hatch and went down into the hold. About two hundred barrels of tanned hides lashed down

there, very loosely secured. They were moved without too much difficulty using tackles attached to the main forestay directly above the hatch. John immediately had some of the bales thrown overboard to lighten the ship.

After three hours of hard work, the brig's bottom could be examined. Two seams in the planking had opened on the port side, at the level of the wales. Since the *Macquarie* was listing to starboard, its opposite port side was exposed, and the defective seams were uncovered. Water could therefore not penetrate. Furthermore, Wilson quickly repaired the planking joints with oakum and a carefully nailed copper sheet.

Soundings revealed less than two feet of water in the hold. The pumps should easily have drained this water and relieved the ship accordingly.

Upon examining the hull, John acknowledged that it had suffered little damage during the grounding. It was likely that part of the false keel would remain embedded in the sand, but this was not essential.

Wilson, after visiting the inside of the building, dove down to determine its position on the shoal.

The *Macquarie* , its bow facing northwest, had struck a muddy sandbank with a very steep drop-off. The lower end of its stem and about two-thirds of its keel were deeply embedded in it. The other part, up to the sternpost, floated on water up to five fathoms deep. The rudder was therefore not engaged and operated freely. John judged it unnecessary to relieve the strain on it. A real advantage, since it would be ready to use at the first opportunity.

The tides are not very strong in the Pacific. However, John Mangles was counting on the arrival of the flood tide to refloat the *Macquarie* .

The brig had reached port about an hour before high tide. Since the ebb tide had begun, its starboard list had become increasingly pronounced. At six o'clock in the morning, at low tide, it reached its maximum angle, and it seemed pointless to prop up the ship with supports. This allowed them to keep on board the yards and other spars that John intended to use to erect a makeshift mast forward.

The task at hand was to take up positions to refloat the *Macquarie* . A long and arduous job. It would obviously be impossible to be ready for high tide at 12:15 PM. They would only see how the brig, partially unloaded, behaved under the force of the tide, and then, at the next tide, they would make a concerted effort.

"Get to work!" commanded John Mangles.

His makeshift sailors were at his command.

John first furled the sails remaining on their cargoes. The major, Robert and Paganel, led by Wilson, went up to the main top.

The main topsail, stretched taut by the wind, would have hindered the ship's release. It had to be tightened, which was done with some difficulty. Then, after stubborn and arduous work by hands unaccustomed to such tasks, the topgallant mast was finally raised. Young Robert, agile as a cat and bold as a cabin boy, had rendered invaluable service during this challenging operation.

The plan was then to drop one, or perhaps two, anchors at the stern of the ship, aligned with the keel. The pulling force would then be

applied to these anchors to haul the *Macquarie ashore* at high tide. This operation presented no difficulty when a boat was available; a drop anchor was taken and dropped at the suitable point, which had been identified beforehand.

But here, there was a shortage of canoes, and it was necessary to make up for it.

Glenarvan was seafaring enough to understand the necessity of these operations. An anchor had to be dropped to free the stranded ship at low tide.

"But without a canoe, what can we do?" he asked John.

“We’ll use the wreckage of the foremast and empty barrels,” replied the young captain. “The operation will be difficult, but not impossible, as the *Macquarie ’s anchors* are small. Once they’re in place, if they don’t drag, I’m hopeful.”

"Good, let's not waste any time, John."

Everyone, sailors and passengers alike, was called onto the deck. Each took part in the task. The rigging still holding the foremast was broken with axes. The lower mast had snapped as it fell, flush with the masthead, so that the top could be easily removed.

John Mangles intended this platform to be used as a raft. He supported it with empty barrels and made it capable of carrying anchors. A sculling oar was installed, allowing the craft to be steered. Moreover, the ebb tide would cause it to drift precisely behind the brig; then, when the anchors were on the bottom, it would be easy to return on board by hauling oneself onto the ship's anchor rode.

This work was half finished when the sun approached the meridian.

John Mangles let Glenarvan continue the operations already underway and took charge of determining his position. This bearing was crucial. Fortunately, John had found a very dirty sextant in Will Halley's room, along with a Greenwich Observatory directory, but one sufficient for obtaining a fix. He cleaned it and brought it up on deck.

This instrument, by means of a series of movable mirrors, brings the sun back to the horizon at noon, that is, when the sun reaches the highest point in its path. It is therefore understandable that, to operate it, one must sight the sextant's telescope at a true horizon, the one formed by the merging of the sky and the water. However, the earth stretched out in a vast promontory to the north, and, positioned between the observer and the true horizon, it made observation impossible.

In cases where the horizon is lacking, it is replaced by an artificial one. This is usually a flat basin filled with mercury, above which the operation is performed. The mercury thus naturally presents a perfectly horizontal mirror.

John had no mercury on board, but he circumvented the difficulty by using a tub filled with liquid tar, the surface of which reflected the image of the sun very well.

He already knew his longitude, being on the west coast of New Zealand. Luckily, because without a stopwatch he wouldn't have been able to calculate it.

He only lacked latitude, and he set about obtaining it.

He therefore used a sextant to determine the meridian altitude of the sun above the horizon.

This altitude was found to be 68° 30'. The distance of the sun to the zenith was therefore 21° 30', since these two numbers added together give 90°. Now, on that day, February 3, the declination of the sun being 16° 30' according to the yearbook, adding it to this zenith distance of 21° 30' gave a latitude of 38°.

The *Macquarie 's position* was thus determined as follows: longitude 171° 13', latitude 38°, except for some insignificant errors produced by the imperfection of the instruments, which could be disregarded.

By consulting the Johnston map that Paganel had purchased in Eden, John Mangles saw that the shipwreck had occurred at the entrance to Aotea Bay, above Cahua Point, on the shores of Auckland Province. Since Auckland is located on the 37th parallel, the *Macquarie* had been pushed one degree south. It would therefore have to sail one degree north to reach the capital of New Zealand.

"So," said Glenarvan, "a journey of twenty-five miles at most. It's nothing."

"What is nothing at sea will be long and arduous on land," replied Paganel.

“So,” replied John Mangles, “we will do everything humanly possible to bail out the *Macquarie* .”

The situation established, operations resumed. At a quarter past noon, the tide was high. John couldn't take advantage of this, since his

anchors hadn't yet been dropped. But he nonetheless observed the *Macquarie* with some anxiety.

Would it float under the influence of the current? The question would be decided in five minutes.

They waited. There were a few creaking noises; they were caused, if not by a heaving, at least by a shudder of the hull. John conceived a hopeful thought for the next tide, but in the end the brig did not move.

Work continued. At two o'clock, the raft was ready. The jet anchor was loaded onto it. John and Wilson went with it, after securing a grapnel to the stern of the ship. The ebb tide carried them adrift, and they anchored half a cable's length from shore in ten fathoms of water.

The situation was good and the raft returned to the ship.

The large davit anchor remained. It was lowered, not without difficulty. The raft repeated the operation, and soon this second anchor was dropped behind the other, in a depth of fifteen fathoms.

Then, hauling themselves along the cable, John and Wilson returned to the *Macquarie* .

The cable and the hawser were loaded onto the windlass, and they waited for the next high tide, which was expected at one o'clock in the morning. It was then six o'clock in the evening.

John Mangles complimented his sailors, and hinted to Paganel that, with courage and good conduct, he could one day become quartermaster.

However, Mr. Olbinett, after helping with the various maneuvers, had returned to the kitchen.

He had prepared a comforting meal that came at just the right time. The crew were ravenous.

He was completely satisfied, and everyone felt refreshed for the work ahead. After dinner, John Mangles took the final precautions necessary to ensure the operation's success. Nothing should be overlooked when refloating a ship. Often, the undertaking fails due to a lack of a few lines of relief, and the stuck keel remains trapped in its sandy bed.

John Mangles had thrown a large part of the cargo overboard to lighten the brig; but the remaining bales, the heavy spars, the spare yards, and several tons of ingots that formed the ballast were moved to the stern to help free the bow with their weight. Wilson and Mulrady also rolled a number of barrels, which they filled with water, to raise the brig's bow.

Midnight struck when these last tasks were completed. The crew was on edge, a regrettable circumstance, at a time when they would need all their strength to haul in the windlass: which led John Mangles to make a new decision.

At that moment, the breeze was calming. The wind barely stirred a few capricious ripples across the surface of the waves. John, observing the horizon, noticed that the wind was tending to shift back from the southwest to the northwest. A sailor could not be mistaken by the peculiar arrangement and color of the cloud bands. Wilson and Mulrady shared their captain's opinion.

John Mangles shared his observations with Glenarvan, and suggested postponing the salvage operation until the next day.

“And here are my reasons,” he said. “First, we are very tired, and all our strength is needed to free the ship. Then, once it’s righted, how can we steer it through these dangerous breakers and in such deep darkness? It’s better to act in broad daylight. Besides, there’s another reason I’m waiting. The wind promises to come to our aid, and I intend to take advantage of it; I want it to push this old hull backward while the sea lifts it. Tomorrow, if I’m not mistaken, the breeze will be from the northwest. We’ll set the mainmast sails to mask it, and they’ll help right the brig.”

These reasons were decisive. Glenarvan and Paganel, the impatient ones on board, surrendered, and the operation was postponed until the next day. The night passed well. A watch had been set, primarily to oversee the anchoring.

Day broke. John Mangles' predictions were coming true. He had boasted of a north-northwest breeze that was starting to freshen. This was a very advantageous boost in strength. The crew was requisitioned.

Robert, Wilson, and Mulrady at the top of the mainmast, the major, Glenarvan, and Paganel on deck, arranged the rigging to set the sails at the precise moment. The topsail yard was hoisted fully, the mainsail and topsail left on their stows.

It was nine o'clock in the morning. Four more hours would pass until high tide. They were not wasted. John used them to erect his makeshift mast on the bow of the brig, to replace the foremast. He would thus be able to leave these dangerous waters as soon as the ship was afloat. The workmen exerted renewed effort, and before noon, the foremast yard was securely fastened in place of a mast.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant proved very helpful, rigging a spare sail on the topgallant mast. It was a joy for them to contribute to the common good. With this rigging complete, while the *Macquarie* left something to be desired in terms of elegance, it could at least sail, provided it did not stray far from the coast.

However, the tide was rising. The surface of the sea heaved in small, choppy waves. The breakers gradually disappeared, like marine animals returning to their watery element. The time was approaching to attempt the great operation. A feverish impatience gripped everyone. No one spoke. They all looked at John. They waited for his order.

John Mangles, leaning over the gunwale of the quarterdeck, watched the tide. He glanced anxiously at the stretched and heavily lashed cable and hawser. At one o'clock, the sea reached its highest point. It was

slack tide, that is, at that brief moment when the water is neither rising nor falling. They had to act without delay.

The mainsail and the main topsail were released and climbed up the mast under the force of the wind.

"To the windlass!" shouted John.

It was a windlass equipped with levers, like those on fire pumps. Glenarvan, Mulrady, and Robert on one side, and Paganel, the Major, and Olbinett on the other, pressed down on the levers, which powered the apparatus. At the same time, John and Wilson, engaging the downhauls, added their efforts to those of their companions.

"Courage! Courage!" cried the young captain, "and all together!"

The cable and the hawsepipe tightened under the powerful action of the windlass. The anchors held firm and did not drag. They had to succeed quickly.

The high tide lasted only a few minutes. The rising water level offered no help in lowering the tide. Efforts were redoubled. The wind was blowing fiercely, blinding the sails against the mast. A few shudders were felt in the hull. The brig seemed about to lift off the sandbank. Perhaps one more arm would be enough to pull it free.

“Helena! Mary!” cried Glenarvan.

The two young women joined their efforts with those of their companions. A final click of the latch could be heard.

But that was all. The brig didn't move. The operation had failed. The ebb tide was already beginning, and it was clear that, even with the help

of the wind and the sea, this reduced crew would not be able to refloat their ship.

## Chapter VI *Where cannibalism is treated theoretically*

John Mangles' first attempt at salvage had failed. A second option had to be pursued without delay. It was clear that the *Macquarie could not be refloated* , and equally clear that the only course of action was to abandon the vessel.

Waiting on board for unreliable rescue would have been imprudent and foolhardy. Before a ship could providentially arrive at the scene of the shipwreck, the *Macquarie* would be torn to pieces! The next storm, or even just a slightly rough sea whipped up by offshore winds, would roll it onto the sands, break it apart, and scatter its wreckage. Before this inevitable destruction, John wanted to reach land.

He therefore proposed to build a raft, or, in maritime language, a "raft" strong enough to carry the passengers and a sufficient quantity of provisions to the Zeeland coast.

There was no room for discussion, only action. The work began, and was well advanced, when night came to interrupt it.

Around eight o'clock in the evening, after supper, while Lady Helena and Mary Grant rested on the bunks in the coachroof, Paganel and his friends discussed serious matters as they walked the ship's deck. Robert had not wanted to leave them.

This brave child listened with all his ears, ready to do a service, ready to dedicate himself to a perilous undertaking.

Paganel had asked John Mangles if the raft could follow the coast to Auckland, instead of disembarking its passengers on land. John replied that such a voyage was impossible with such a defective craft.

"And what we cannot attempt on a raft," said Paganel, "could it have been done with the brig's canoe?"

—Yes, if necessary, replied John Mangles, but on the condition of sailing by day and anchoring by night.

—So, these wretches who abandoned us…

—Oh! Those men, replied John Mangles, they were drunk, and, in this deep darkness, I fear they paid with their lives for this cowardly abandonment.

"Too bad for them," replied Paganel, "and too bad for us, because that canoe would have been very useful."

"What do you want, Paganel?" said Glenarvan. "The raft will carry us to shore."

"That's precisely what I wanted to avoid," replied the geographer.

—What! Can a journey of twenty miles at most, after what we have done in the Pampas and across Australia, frighten men hardened by fatigues?

“My friends,” replied Paganel, “I do not doubt your courage or the valor of our companions. Twenty miles! That is nothing in any country other than New Zealand. You will not suspect me of cowardice. I was the first to lead you across America, across Australia. But here, I repeat, anything is better than venturing into that treacherous land.”

"Anything is better than exposing oneself to certain loss on a stranded ship," said John Mangles.

"What is it that we have so much to fear from New Zealand?" asked Glenarvan.

"The savages," replied Paganel.

"Savages!" replied Glenarvan. "Can't we avoid them by following the coast? Besides, an attack by a few wretches can't worry ten well-armed Europeans determined to defend themselves."

"They are not wretches," replied Paganel, shaking his head. "The New Zealanders form formidable tribes, fighting against English domination, against invaders, who often defeat them, and who always eat them!"

"Cannibals!" cried Robert, "Cannibals!"

Then we heard him murmuring those two names:

"My sister! Mrs. Helena!"

"Fear nothing, my child," Glenarvan replied, to reassure the young boy. "Our friend Paganel is exaggerating!"

“I’m not exaggerating,” Paganel continued. “Robert has shown he’s a man, and I’m treating him like one, by not hiding the truth from him. New Zealanders are the most cruel, not to say the most voracious, of cannibals. They devour everything that falls into their laps. For them, war is nothing more than a hunt for that tasty game called man, and it must be admitted, it’s the only logical war. Europeans kill their enemies and bury them. Savages kill their enemies and eat them, and, as my compatriot Toussenel so aptly put it, the evil lies not so much in

roasting your enemy when he's dead, but in killing him when he doesn't want to die."

"Paganel," replied the major, "there's room for discussion, but this isn't the time. Whether it's logical to be eaten or not, we don't want to be eaten. But how is it that Christianity hasn't yet eradicated these cannibalistic habits?"

"Do you really think all New Zealanders are Christians?" replied Paganel. "They are a small minority, and missionaries are still, all too often, victims of these brutes. Last year, Reverend Walkner was martyred with horrific cruelty. The Maori hanged him. Their women gouged out his eyes. They drank his blood, they ate his brains. And this murder took place in 1864, at Opotiki, a few leagues from Auckland, practically under the noses of the English authorities. My friends, it takes centuries to change the nature of a race of men. What the Maori have been, they will be for a long time to come. Their whole history is made of blood. How many crews they have slaughtered and devoured, from the sailors of the Tasman to the seamen of the *Hawes* ! And it wasn't white flesh that whetted their appetite." Long before the arrival of Europeans, the Zeelanders sought to satisfy their gluttony through murder.

Many travelers lived among them, who witnessed cannibal meals, where the guests were driven only by the desire to eat a delicacy, such as the flesh of a woman or a child!

—Bah! said the major, aren't these stories mostly due to the imagination of travelers?

We gladly return from dangerous countries and the stomachs of cannibals!

“I allow for some exaggeration,” replied Paganel. “But trustworthy men have spoken—the missionaries Kendall and Marsden, Captains Dillon, d’Urville, Laplace, and others—and I believe their accounts; I must believe them. The Zeelanders are cruel by nature. Upon the death of their leaders, they sacrifice human victims. They claim that these sacrifices appease the wrath of the deceased, who might strike the living, and at the same time provide him with servants for the afterlife! But since they eat these posthumous servants after slaughtering them, one is justified in believing that their stomachs drive them to it more than superstition.”

"However," said John Mangles, "I imagine that superstition plays a role in the cannibalism scenes. That is why, if religion changes, morals will change as well."

“Well, my friend John,” replied Paganel. “You raise the serious question of the origin of cannibalism. Was it religion, was it hunger that drove men to devour one another? This discussion would be pointless at the moment. Why does cannibalism exist? The question is not yet resolved; but it exists, a serious fact, about which we have all too much reason to be concerned.”

Paganel was right. Cannibalism has become chronic in New Zealand, as it has in Fiji and the Torres Strait. Superstition obviously plays a role in these heinous customs, but there are cannibals because there are times when game is scarce and hunger is great. The savages began by eating human flesh to satisfy the demands of an insatiable appetite;

then, the priests regulated and sanctified these monstrous habits. The meal became a ceremony, that's all.

In fact, in the eyes of the Maori, nothing is more natural than eating one another. Missionaries often questioned them about cannibalism. They asked them why they devoured their brothers. To which the chiefs replied that fish eat fish, dogs eat men, men eat dogs, and dogs eat each other. In their own theogony, legend recounts that one god ate another god. With such precedents, how could one resist the pleasure of eating one's fellow human being?

Furthermore, the Zeelanders claim that by devouring a dead enemy, one destroys their spiritual essence. One thus inherits their soul, their strength, their worth, which are believed to be particularly concentrated in the brain. Therefore, this part of the individual is featured in feasts as a dish of honor and the most prized delicacy.

However, Paganel argued, not without reason, that sensuality, and above all need, excited the Zeelanders to cannibalism, and not only the savages of Oceania, but also the savages of Europe.

"Yes," he added, "cannibalism long reigned among the ancestors of the most civilized peoples, and do not mistake that for a personality trait, especially among the Scots."

—Really? said Mac Nabbs.

“Yes, Major,” Paganel continued. “When you read certain passages by Saint Jerome about the *atticos* of Scotland, you’ll see what to think of your ancestors! And without going back further than historical times, during the reign of Elizabeth, at the very time when Shakespeare was

dreaming up his Shylock, wasn't Sawney Bean, the Scottish bandit, executed for the crime of cannibalism? And what feeling had driven him to eat human flesh? Religion? No, hunger."

—Hunger? said John Mangles.

"Hunger," replied Paganel, "but above all, the carnivore's need to replenish its flesh and blood with the nitrogen contained in animal matter. It's good to fuel the lungs with tuberous and starchy plants. But anyone who wants to be strong and active must consume those nourishing foods that repair muscles. As long as the Maori are not members of the vegetable-eating society, they will eat meat, and, as meat, human flesh."

"Why not animal meat?" said Glenarvan.

"Because they have no animals," replied Paganel, "and this must be understood, not to excuse, but to explain their cannibalistic habits. Four-legged animals, even birds, are rare in this inhospitable land. Thus, the Maori have always fed on human flesh. There are even 'seasons for eating men,' as in civilized countries, seasons for hunting. Then the great hunts take place, that is to say, the great wars, and entire tribes are served at the table of the victors."

"So," said Glenarvan, "according to you, Paganel, cannibalism will only disappear the day sheep, oxen and pigs swarm in the prairies of New Zealand."

"Of course, my dear lord, and it will still take years for the Maori to break their taste for Zeeland meat, which they prefer above all others, for sons will long love what their fathers loved. According to them, this

meat tastes like pork, but with a richer aroma. As for white meat, they are less fond of it, because white people add salt to their food, which gives it a particular flavor that gourmets find unappealing.”

"They're difficult!" said the major. "But do they eat this white or black meat raw or cooked?"

"Hey! What's it to you, Mr. Mac Nabbs?" exclaimed
Robert.

"What do you mean, my boy," replied the major seriously, "but if I must ever end up in the jaws of a cannibal, I'd rather be cooked!"

-For what?

—To make sure I don't get eaten alive!

"Good! Major," Paganel continued, "but if it's to be cooked alive!"

"The fact is," replied the major, "that I would not give a choice for half a crown."

“Be that as it may, Mac Nabbs, and if it pleases you,” replied Paganel, “you should know that New Zealanders only eat meat cooked or smoked. They are well-educated people and know their way around a kitchen. But, for my part, the idea of being eaten is particularly unpleasant! To end one’s life in the stomach of a savage, ugh!”

"Finally," said John Mangles, "it follows from all this that we must not fall into their hands. Let us also hope that one day Christianity will have abolished these monstrous customs."

“Yes, we must hope so,” replied Paganel; “but, believe me, a savage who has tasted human flesh will find it difficult to renounce it. Judge for yourselves by the following two facts.”

"Let's look at the facts, Paganel," said Glenarvan.

The first story is recounted in the chronicles of the Jesuit society in Brazil. A Portuguese missionary one day met a very ill old Brazilian woman. She had only a few days left to live. The Jesuit instructed her in the truths of Christianity, which the dying woman accepted without question. Then, after nourishing the soul, he considered nourishing the body, and he offered his penitent some European delicacies. “Alas!” replied the old woman, “my stomach cannot tolerate any kind of food. There is only one thing I would like to taste; but, unfortunately, no one here could procure it for me.” “What is it?” asked the Jesuit. “Ah! My son! It is a little boy’s hand! I think I would nibble on its little bones with pleasure!”

"Ah, that's it! So it's good?" asked Robert.

“My second story will answer you, my boy,” Paganel continued. “One day, a missionary was reproaching a cannibal for this horrible custom, contrary to divine law, of eating human flesh. ‘And besides, it must be bad!’ he added. ‘Ah! Father!’ replied the savage, casting a covetous glance at the missionary, ‘say that God forbids it! But don’t say it’s bad! If only you had eaten some!’”

## Chapter VII *Where we finally reach a land that should be avoided*

The facts reported by Paganel were indisputable.

The cruelty of the New Zealanders could not be doubted. Therefore, it was dangerous to go ashore.

But even if the danger had been a hundred times greater, it had to be faced. John Mangles felt the need to leave without delay a ship doomed to imminent destruction. Between two perils, one certain, the other merely probable, there was no room for hesitation.

As for the chance of being rescued by a ship, it was not a realistic expectation. The *Macquarie* was not on the route of ships seeking landing places in New Zealand.

They were heading either further north to Auckland, or further south to New Plymouth. But the grounding had occurred precisely between these two points, on the deserted stretch of the Ika-Na-Maoui coast. A treacherous, dangerous, and malevolent shore. The ships' only concern was to avoid it, and, if the wind carried them there, to get away as quickly as possible.

"When will we leave?" asked Glenarvan.

“Tomorrow morning at ten o’clock,” replied John Mangles. “The tide will begin to rise and will carry us ashore.”

The following day, February 5th, at eight o'clock, the construction of the raft was completed. John had devoted all his care to the establishment of the device.

The foremast top, used for anchoring, was insufficient for transporting passengers and provisions. A sturdy, steerable vessel was needed, capable of withstanding the sea during a nine-mile voyage.

Only the masts could provide the materials necessary for its construction.

Wilson and Mulrady had set to work. The rigging was cut at the level of the deadeyes, and under the blows of the axe, the mainmast, attacked at the base, went over the starboard bulwarks which creaked under its fall. The *Macquarie* then lay flat as a pontoon.

The lower mast, the topmast, and the topgallant mast were sawn apart. The main pieces of the raft were now afloat. They were joined to the remains of the foremast, and these spars were securely lashed together. John carefully placed half a dozen empty barrels in the gaps, which were intended to raise the structure above the water.

On this first, firmly established base, Wilson had laid a kind of openwork floor made of grating. Waves could therefore break over the raft without lingering there, and the passengers would be protected from the damp. Moreover, securely fastened water tanks formed a sort of circular bulwark that protected the deck against the large waves.

That morning, John, seeing the favorable wind, had the small topgallant's yard installed in the center of the craft as a mast. It was secured with shrouds and fitted with a makeshift sail. A large oar with a wide blade, fixed to the stern, allowed the craft to be steered, if the wind gave it sufficient speed.

This raft, built in the best possible conditions, could withstand the swell. But would it steer, would it reach the shore if the wind shifted? That was the question. Loading began at nine o'clock.

First, provisions were loaded in sufficient quantity to last until Auckland, because it was not possible to rely on the production of this ungrateful land.

Olbinett's private office provided some preserved meat, what remained of the provisions bought for the *Macquarie crossing* . Not much, really. They had to rely on the ship's meager rations: some low-quality ship's biscuits and two barrels of salted fish. The *steward* was utterly ashamed.

These provisions were placed in hermetically sealed crates, watertight and impervious to seawater, then lowered and secured with strong lashings to the foot of the makeshift mast. The weapons and ammunition were placed in a safe and dry location.

Fortunately, the travelers were well armed with rifles and revolvers.

A jet anchor was also taken on board in case John, unable to reach land in a tide, was forced to anchor offshore.

At ten o'clock, the tide began to be felt. A light breeze was blowing from the northwest. A slight swell rippled the surface of the sea.

"Are we ready?" asked John Mangles.

"Everything is ready, Captain," replied Wilson.

"Get on board!" shouted John.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant descended a crude rope ladder and settled themselves at the foot of the mast on the crates of provisions, their companions beside them. Wilson took the helm. John took his

place at the sail's hawsers, and Mulrady cut the mooring line that held the raft to the brig's sides.

The sail was unfurled, and the craft began to head towards land under the combined action of the tide and the wind.

The coast remained nine miles away, a modest distance that a rowboat with good oars could have covered in three hours. But with the raft, they would have to back down. If the wind held, they might be able to reach land in a single tide. But if the breeze died down, the ebb tide would carry them away, and they would have to anchor and wait for the next tide. A big deal, and one that certainly worried John Mangles.

However, he hoped to succeed. The wind was getting fresher.

Since the tide began at ten o'clock, we had to have reached land by three o'clock, otherwise we would have to drop anchor or be driven back out to sea by the receding tide.

The beginning of the crossing was a happy one. Little by little, the black heads of the reefs and the yellow carpet of the banks disappeared under the rising swell and the flood.

Great care and extreme skill were required to avoid these submerged breakers and to steer a craft that was not very sensitive to the rudder and prone to deviations.

At noon, he was still five miles from the coast.

A fairly clear sky allowed the main landforms to be distinguished. In the northeast rose a mountain two thousand five hundred feet high. It stood out against the horizon in a strange way, and its silhouette

reproduced the grimacing profile of a monkey's head, its neck tilted back.

It was Pirongia, located exactly, according to the map, on the thirty-eighth parallel.

At half past noon, Paganel remarked that all the reefs had disappeared under the rising tide.

"Except for one," replied Lady Helena.

"Which one? Madam," asked Paganel.

"There," replied Lady Helena, pointing to a black dot a mile ahead.

"Indeed," replied Paganel. "Let's try to determine its position so as not to fall on it, for the tide will soon cover it."

"He's right by the north ridge of the mountain," said John Mangles. "Wilson, make sure you pass well clear."

"Yes, Captain," replied the sailor, putting all his weight on the large stern oar.

In half an hour, we gained half a mile. But, strangely enough, the black dot still emerged from the waves.

John watched him closely and, to observe him better, he borrowed Paganel's spyglass.

"It is not a reef," he said, after a moment's examination; "it is a floating object that rises and falls with the swell."

"Isn't that a piece of the *Macquarie 's mast* ?" asked Lady Helena.

"No," replied Glenarvan, "no debris could have drifted so far from the ship."

—Wait! cried John Mangles, I recognize it, it's the canoe!

—The brig's canoe! said Glenarvan.

—Yes, *my lord* . The brig's boat, the keel upside down!

"The poor things!" cried Lady Helena, "they have perished!"

"Yes, madam," replied John Mangles, "and they were doomed, for in the midst of those breakers, on a stormy sea, on that dark night, they were running to certain death."

"May heaven have had mercy on them!" murmured Mary Grant.

For a few moments, the passengers remained silent. They watched the frail boat approaching. It had obviously capsized four miles from land, and of those on board, not one had likely survived.

"But this canoe can be useful to us," said Glenarvan.

“Indeed,” replied John Mangles. “Set your course for it, Wilson.”

The raft's direction was changed, but the breeze gradually died down, and the boat was not reached for another two hours.

Mulrady, positioned at the front, parried the impact, and the capsized dinghy came to rest alongside the side.

"Empty?" asked John Mangles.

"Yes, Captain," replied the sailor, "the boat is empty, and its planks have split open. It cannot therefore be of any use to us."

"Can't we get any benefit from it?" asked Mac Nabbs.

"None," replied John Mangles. "It's a wreck fit only for burning."

"I regret it," said Paganel, "because that 'you-you' could have led us to Auckland."

“We must resign ourselves to it, Monsieur Paganel,” replied John Mangles. “Besides, on such a turbulent sea, I still prefer our raft to this fragile vessel. It only took a slight jolt to break it to pieces! So, *my lord* , we have nothing more to do here.”

"Whenever you want, John," said Glenarvan.

"Let's go, Wilson," the young captain continued, "and straight for the coast."

The tide was expected to rise for another hour or so. A distance of two miles was covered.

But then the breeze died down almost entirely and seemed to pick up again from the land. The raft remained motionless. Soon, it even began to drift out to sea with the ebb tide. John couldn't hesitate for a second.

"Wet!" he shouted.

Mulrady, prepared to carry out this order, dropped anchor in five fathoms of water. The raft drifted back two fathoms on the tightly stretched hawser.

With the makeshift sail furled, arrangements were made for a fairly long stay.

Indeed, the sea was not expected to turn before nine o'clock in the evening, and since John Mangles had no intention of sailing during the night, he remained anchored there until five in the morning. Land was in sight less than three miles away.

A fairly strong swell was lifting the waves, and seemed by a continuous movement to be carrying them towards the coast.

Also, Glenarvan, when he learned that the entire night would be spent on board, asked John why he wasn't taking advantage of the undulations of this swell to get closer to the coast.

“Your honor,” replied the young captain, “is deceived by an optical illusion. Although it appears to move, the swell does not. It is a swaying of liquid molecules, nothing more. Throw a piece of wood into the middle of these waves, and you will see that it will remain stationary until the ebb tide begins. All we can do, therefore, is be patient.”

"And dinner," added the major.

Olbinett took a few pieces of dried meat and a dozen biscuits from a crate of provisions. The *steward* blushed to offer his employers such a meager meal. But it was accepted willingly, even by the female passengers, whose appetites were hardly whetted by the sudden movements of the sea. Indeed, the jolts of the raft, which faced the swell by shaking its tow rope, were exhaustingly brutal. The craft, incessantly tossed about on short, capricious waves, could not have struck the sharp edges of an underwater rock more violently. At times, it seemed

as if it were touching. The grapnel was working hard, and every half hour John would give it a stroke to refresh it. Without this precaution, it would inevitably have broken, and the raft, left to its own devices, would have been lost at sea.

John's apprehensions are therefore easily understood. Either his hawsepipe could break, or his anchor could drag, and in both cases he was in distress.

Night was approaching. Already, the sun's disk, elongated by refraction and blood red, was about to disappear behind the horizon. The last wisps of water shimmered in the west, sparkling like sheets of liquid silver. To that side, all was sky and water, except for one distinct point: the hulk of the *Macquarie,* motionless on its shoal.

The rapid twilight delayed the formation of darkness by only a few minutes, and soon the land, which bounded the horizons to the east and north, melted into the night.

What a harrowing situation it was for these shipwrecked souls on that narrow raft, enveloped by darkness! Some drifted off into a restless, anxious sleep, a sleep conducive to nightmares, while others couldn't find an hour of rest. By daybreak, all were exhausted from the night's fatigue.

With the rising tide, the wind shifted back to offshore. It was six o'clock in the morning. Time was of the essence. John made preparations for departure. He ordered the anchor to be raised. But the anchor flukes, strained by the cable, had become deeply embedded in the sand. Without a windlass, and even with the tackles Wilson rigged, it was impossible to pull it free.

Half an hour passed in futile attempts.

John, eager to set sail, had the anchor line cut, abandoning his anchor and eliminating any possibility of anchoring in an emergency, should the tide not be strong enough to reach the shore. But he didn't want to delay any longer, and a blow with an axe delivered the raft to the mercy of the breeze, aided by a current of two knots per hour.

The sail was dropped. We drifted slowly towards the land, which faded into grayish masses against a sky illuminated by the rising sun. The reefs were skillfully avoided and passed. But, in the uncertain offshore breeze, the craft seemed to be making little progress towards the shore. What a struggle to reach New Zealand, which was so perilous to land on!

At nine o'clock, however, land was still less than a mile away. Breakers jagged around it. It was very steep. A suitable landing place had to be found. The wind gradually eased and died down completely. The lifeless sail battered the mast and strained it. John had it furled. The current alone carried the raft to shore, but it had been necessary to give up steering it, and enormous seaweed was still slowing its progress.

At ten o'clock, John found himself more or less stationary, three cable lengths from the shore. No anchor to drop.

Was it then going to be pushed back out to sea by the ebb tide?

John, his hands clenched, his heart consumed with worry, cast a fierce gaze at this inaccessible land.

Fortunately—fortunately this time—a collision occurred. The raft came to a stop. It had just run aground in the open sea, on a sandy

bottom twenty-five fathoms from the shore.

Glenarvan, Robert, Wilson, and Mulrady jumped into the water. The raft was securely fastened with mooring lines to the nearby reefs. The women, carried from arm to arm, reached land without getting a crease of their dresses wet, and soon all of them, with weapons and provisions, had definitively set foot on those formidable shores of New Zealand.

## Chapter VIII *The present of the country where one is*

Glenarvan had wanted to follow the coast and head back towards Auckland without losing an hour. But since morning, the sky had become heavy with clouds, and around eleven o'clock, after the landing, the vapors condensed into torrential rain. This made it impossible to set off and forced them to seek shelter.

Wilson very conveniently discovered a cave carved by the sea in the basaltic rocks of the shore.

The travelers took refuge there with weapons and provisions. There lay a whole harvest of dried seaweed, once gathered by the waves.

It was a natural bedding that we got used to.

Some pieces of wood were piled up at the entrance of the cave, then lit, and everyone dried themselves as best they could.

John hoped that the duration of this torrential rain would be inversely proportional to its intensity.

Nothing of the sort happened. The hours passed without any change in the state of the sky. The wind freshened around noon and further intensified the squall.

This setback would have frustrated even the most patient man. But what could be done? It would have been madness to brave such a storm without a vehicle. Besides, a few days should suffice to reach Auckland, and a twelve-hour delay could not harm the expedition if the natives did not arrive.

During this forced stop, the conversation turned to the incidents of the war then taking place in New Zealand. But to understand and appreciate the gravity of the circumstances in which the survivors of the *Macquarie found themselves* , one must know the history of this struggle that was then ravaging the island of Ika-Na-Maoui.

Since Abel Tasman's arrival in Cook Strait on December 16, 1642, the New Zealanders, frequently visited by European ships, had remained free in their independent islands. No European power considered seizing this archipelago that commands the Pacific Ocean. Only the missionaries, established in these various locations, brought the benefits of Christian civilization to these new lands. Some of them, however, and especially the Anglicans, were preparing the New Zealand chiefs to submit to the yoke of England. These chiefs, cleverly deceived, signed a letter addressed to Queen Victoria requesting her protection. But the more discerning among them sensed the folly of this move, and one of them, after applying the image of his tattoo to the letter, uttered these prophetic words: "We have lost our country; henceforth, it is no longer ours; "Soon a foreigner will come and seize it, and we will be his slaves."

Indeed, on January 29, 1840, the corvette *Herald* arrived in the Bay of Islands, north of Ika-Na-Maoui. Captain Hobson disembarked at the village of Korora-Reka. The inhabitants were invited to a general assembly in the Protestant church. There, the titles that Captain Hobson held from the Queen of England were read aloud.

On January 5th, the principal Zeeland chiefs were summoned to the English resident's residence in the village of Paia. Captain Hobson sought to obtain their submission, stating that the Queen had sent troops and ships to protect them, that their rights remained guaranteed, and that their freedom was complete. However, their properties were to belong to Queen Victoria, to whom they were obligated to sell them.

The majority of the chiefs, finding the protection too costly, refused to agree. But promises and gifts had more power over these savages than Captain Hobson's grand pronouncements, and the takeover was confirmed. From that year, 1840, until the day the *Duncan* left the Gulf of Clyde, what happened? Nothing that Jacques Paganel didn't know, nothing he wasn't ready to share with his companions.

“Madam,” he replied to Lady Helena’s questions, “I will repeat what I have already had occasion to say: the New Zealanders are a courageous people who, after yielding for a moment, resisted England’s invasions tooth and nail. The Maori tribes are organized like the ancient clans of Scotland. They are like large families, each recognizing a chief who is very concerned with showing complete deference to him. The men of this race are proud and brave; some are tall, with straight hair, like the Maltese or the Jews of Baghdad and of a superior race; others are shorter and stockier, like mulattoes, but all are robust, haughty, and

warlike. They had a famous chief named Hihi, a veritable Vercingetorix." You will therefore not be surprised if the war with the English drags on in the territory of Ika-Na-Maoui, because there is the famous Waikato tribe, which William Thompson is training in the defense of the land.

"But aren't the English," asked John Mangles, "masters of the main points of New Zealand?"

"No doubt, my dear John," replied Paganel. "After Captain Hobson took possession, later becoming governor of the island, nine settlements were gradually established between 1840 and 1862 in the most advantageous locations. From there, nine provinces were created: four in the North Island—Auckland, Taranaki, Wellington, and Hawkes Bay; and five in the South Island—Nelson, Marlborough, Canterbury, Otago, and Southland—with a total population of 180,346 as of June 30, 1864. Important commercial towns have sprung up everywhere. When we arrive in Auckland, you will be compelled to admire without reservation the situation of this southern Corinth, overlooking its narrow isthmus, which spans the Pacific Ocean like a bridge, and which already has 12,000 inhabitants. To the west is New Plymouth; to the east, Ahuhiri; To the south, Wellington is already a thriving and busy city. On the island of Tawai-Pounamou, you would be spoiled for choice between Nelson, this Montpellier of the Antipodes, this garden of New Zealand, Picton on the Cook Strait, Christchurch, Invercargill, and Dunedin, in that opulent province of Otago where gold seekers from all over the world flock. And note that this is not a collection of a few shacks, an agglomeration of savage families, but rather real cities, with ports, cathedrals, banks, docks, botanical gardens, natural history museums, acclimatization societies, newspapers, hospitals, charitable

institutions, philosophical institutes, Freemason lodges, clubs, choral societies, theaters, and world's fair halls—no more and no less than London or Paris! And if my memory serves me right, it was in 1865, this very year, and perhaps at the very moment I am speaking to you, that the industrial products of the entire globe were exhibited in a country of cannibals!

—What! Despite the war with the natives? asked Lady Helena.

“The English, madam, are certainly preoccupied with a war!” replied Paganel. “They fight and they expose at the same time. It doesn’t bother them. They’re even building railways under the guns of the New Zealanders. In Auckland province, the Drury Railway and the Mere Mere Railway cut through the main points occupied by the rebels. I’d wager the workers are firing from the tops of the locomotives.”

"But where does this endless war stand?" asked John Mangles.

“It’s been six long months since we left Europe,” replied Paganel, “so I can’t know what’s happened since our departure, except for a few things I read in the newspapers of Maryland and Seymour during our crossing of Australia. But at that time, there was fierce fighting on the island of Ikana-Maoui.”

"And when did this war begin?" said Mary
Grant.

“You mean ‘started again,’ my dear miss,” replied Paganel, “for a first uprising took place in 1845. It was towards the end of 1863; but long before that, the Māori were preparing to shake off the yoke of English rule. The Native National Party was actively campaigning to bring about

the election of a Māori chief. They wanted to make a king of old Potatau, and of his village situated between the Waikato and Waipa rivers, the capital of the new kingdom. This Potatau was only an old man, more shrewd than bold, but he had an energetic and intelligent prime minister, a descendant of the Ngatihahua tribe who inhabited the Isthmus of Auckland before the foreign occupation. This minister, named William Thompson, became the soul of this war of independence. He skillfully organized Māori troops. Under his inspiration, a chief of Taranaki united the scattered tribes under a single banner; Another Waikato chief formed the "Land League," a veritable public-good league, intended to prevent the natives from selling their land to the British government. Banquets were held, as in civilized countries that precede a revolution. British newspapers began to note these alarming signs, and the government became seriously concerned about the Land League's activities. In short, tempers were flaring, the mine ready to explode. All that was needed was the spark, or rather the clash of two interests, to ignite it.

"And this shock?" Glenarvan asked.

“It took place in 1860,” replied Paganel, “in the province of Taranaki, on the southwest coast of Ika-Na-Maoui. A native man owned six hundred acres of land near New Plymouth. He sold it to the British government. But when the surveyors came to measure the land, Chief Kingi protested, and in March, he built a camp on the disputed six hundred acres, defended by high palisades. A few days later, Colonel Gold captured the camp with his troops, and on that very day, the first shot of the American War was fired.”

"Are there many Maori?" asked John Mangles.

“The Maori population has been greatly reduced over the past century,” replied the geographer. “In 1769, Cook estimated it at four hundred thousand inhabitants. In 1845, the census of the *native protectorate* lowered it to one hundred and nine thousand. Civilizing massacres, disease, and firewater have decimated it; but on the two islands, ninety thousand natives still remain, including thirty thousand warriors who will long hold off the European troops.”

"Has the revolt been successful to this day?" said Lady Helena.

“Yes, madam, and the English themselves have often admired the courage of the New Zealanders. They wage a guerrilla war, attempt skirmishes, rush small detachments, and plunder settlers’ estates. General Cameron didn’t feel comfortable in these campaigns where every bush had to be cleared. In 1863, after a long and bloody struggle, the Maori occupied a large fortified position on the upper Waikato River, at the end of a chain of steep hills, and protected by three lines of defense.”

"Prophets called upon the entire Maori population to defend their land and promised the extermination of the 'pakeka,' meaning the white people. Three thousand men prepared for battle under the command of General Cameron, and showed no mercy to the Maori since the barbaric murder of Captain Sprent. Bloody battles ensued."

“Some battles lasted twelve hours, without the Maori yielding to the European cannons. It was the fierce Waikato tribe, under the command of William Thompson, that formed the core of the independent army. This native general initially commanded two thousand five hundred warriors, then eight thousand.”

"The subjects of Shongi and Heki, two formidable leaders, came to his aid. The women, in this holy war, took part in the most arduous tasks."

“But justice doesn’t always have the right weapons. After bloody battles, General Cameron managed to subdue the Waikato district, an empty and depopulated district, because the Māori escaped him on all sides. There were admirable feats of war. Four hundred Māori, besieged in the Orakan fortress by a thousand British soldiers under Brigadier General Carey, without food or water, refused to surrender. Then, one day, at midday, they fought their way through the decimated 40th Regiment and escaped into the marshes.”

"But did the submission of the Waikato district," asked John Mangles, "end this bloody war?"

“No, my friend,” replied Paganel. “The English have resolved to march on the province of Taranaki and besiege Mataitawa, William Thompson’s fortress. But they will not take it without considerable losses. Just as I was leaving Paris, I learned that the governor and the general had accepted the submission of the Taranga tribes and were leaving them three-quarters of their land. It was also said that the principal leader of the rebellion, William Thompson, was considering surrendering; but the Australian newspapers have not confirmed this news; on the contrary. It is therefore likely that at this very moment the resistance is being organized with renewed vigor.”

—And according to your opinion, Paganel, said Glenarvan, this struggle would take place in the provinces of Taranaki and Auckland.

—I think so.

*Macquarie* threw us ?

—Precisely. We landed a few miles above Kawhia Harbour, where the Maori national flag must still be flying.

"Then we will wisely head back north," said
Glenarvan.

"Very wisely indeed," replied Paganel. "New Zealanders are enraged against Europeans, and particularly against the English. So, let's avoid falling into their hands."

"Perhaps we will encounter some detachment of European troops?" said Lady Helena. "That would be good fortune."

“Perhaps, madam,” replied the geographer, “but I hope not. Isolated detachments don’t readily patrol the countryside when the smallest bush, the tiniest thicket, conceals a skilled skirmisher. I therefore have no intention of relying on an escort from the soldiers of the 40th Regiment. But several missions are established on the west coast we will be following, and we can easily make stages from one to another as far as Auckland. I’m even considering joining the route that Mr. De Hochstetter traveled by following the course of the Waikato River.”

"Was he a traveler, Mr. Paganel?" asked Robert Grant.

—Yes, my boy, a member of the scientific commission embarked on board the Austrian frigate *Novara* during its circumnavigation voyage in 1858.

"Mr. Paganel," continued Robert, whose eyes lit up at the thought of great geographical expeditions, "does New Zealand have famous

travelers like Burke and Stuart in Australia?"

—Some, my child, such as Doctor Hooker, Professor Brizard, the naturalists Dieffenbach and Julius Haast; but, although several of them paid with their lives for their adventurous passion, they are less famous than the Australian or African travelers.

"And do you know their story?" asked young Grant.

—Good heavens, my boy, and since I see that you're dying to know as much as I do, I'll tell you.

—Thank you, Mr. Paganel, I'm listening.

"And we, too, are listening to you," said Lady Helena. "This isn't the first time bad weather has forced us to educate ourselves. Speak for everyone, Mr. Paganel."

“At your service, madam,” replied the geographer, “but my story will not be long. It is not about those daring explorers who wrestled hand-to-hand with the Australian Minotaur. New Zealand is too small a country to defend itself against human exploration. Thus, my heroes were not travelers, strictly speaking, but mere tourists, victims of the most prosaic accidents.”

"And you name them?" asked Mary Grant.

—The surveyor Witcombe, and Charlton Howitt, the very same man who found Burke's remains, in that memorable expedition I told you about during our stop on the banks of the Wimerra. Witcombe and Howitt each commanded two expeditions to the island of Tawai-Punamou.

Both men set out from Christchurch in the early months of 1863 to discover different routes through the mountains of northern Canterbury. Howitt, crossing the range on the northern border of the province, established his headquarters on Brunner Lake; Witcombe, on the other hand, found a passage in the Rakaia Valley that led east of Mount Tyndall. Witcombe had a traveling companion, Jacob Louper, who published an account of the journey and the disaster in the *Lyttleton Times* . As far as I can recall, on April 22, 1863, the two explorers were at the foot of a glacier where the Rakaia River originates. They climbed to the summit of the mountain and set out in search of new routes. The next day, Witcombe and Louper, exhausted from fatigue and cold, camped in deep snow four thousand feet above sea level. For seven days they wandered through the mountains, down valleys with sheer walls offering no escape, often without fire, sometimes without food, their sugar turned to syrup, their biscuit reduced to a soggy paste, their clothes and blankets dripping with rain, devoured by insects, making long days of three miles and short days during which they barely gained two hundred yards. Finally, on April 29, they came across a Maori hut and, in a garden, a few handfuls of potatoes. This was the last meal the two friends shared together. That evening, they reached the seashore near the mouth of the Taramakau. They needed to cross to its right bank to head north toward the Grey River. The Taramakau was deep and wide.

After an hour of searching, Louper found two small, damaged canoes, which he repaired as best he could and tied together. The two travelers set off towards evening. But barely halfway up the current, the canoes began to fill with water.

Witcombe jumped in and swam back to the left bank. Jacob Louper, who couldn't swim, clung to the boat. This saved him, but not without a mishap. The unfortunate man was pushed towards the breakers.

A first wave plunged him to the bottom of the sea. A second brought him back to the surface. He was struck against the rocks. The darkest of nights had arrived. The rain fell in torrents. Louper, his body bloody and swollen with seawater, remained tossed about for several hours. Finally, the boat struck dry land, and the shipwrecked man, devoid of feeling, was thrown back onto the shore. The next day, at daybreak, he dragged himself toward a spring and realized that the current had carried him a mile from where he had just attempted to cross the river. He got up, followed the coast, and soon found the unfortunate Witcombe, his body and head buried in the mud. He was dead. With his own hands, Louper dug a grave in the sand and buried his companion's body. Two days later, dying of hunger, he was taken in by hospitable Maoris — there are a few of them — and, on May 4, he reached Lake Brunner, at the camp of Charlton Howitt, who, six weeks later, would himself perish like the unfortunate Witcombe.

—Yes! said John Mangles, it seems that these catastrophes follow one another, that a fatal link unites the travelers together, and that they all perish when the center breaks.

“You are right, my friend John,” replied Paganel, “and I have often made that observation. By what law of solidarity was Howitt led to succumb in almost the same circumstances? We cannot say. Charlton Howitt had been hired by Mr. Wyde, the government works chief, to lay out a road passable by horses from the plains of Hurunui to the mouth of the Taramakau. He set out on January 1, 1863, accompanied by five

men. He carried out his mission with incomparable intelligence, and a forty-mile-long road was cut through to an impassable point on the Taramakau. Howitt then returned to Christchurch and, despite the approaching winter, asked to continue his work."

Mr. Wyde agreed. Howitt left to resupply his camp to last through the winter. It was at this time that he took in Jacob Louper. On June 27, Howitt and two of his men, Robert Little and Henri Mullis, left the camp. They crossed Lake Brunner. Since then, they have never been seen again. Their canoe, flimsy and barely afloat, was found washed up on the shore. They were searched for for nine weeks, but in vain, and it is clear that these unfortunate men, who could not swim, drowned in the lake.

"But why shouldn't they be safe and sound among some Zeelandic tribe?" said Lady Helena. "At least one is entitled to have doubts about their death."

"Alas! No, madam," replied Paganel, "since, in August 1864, a year after the catastrophe, they had not reappeared… And when one goes a year without reappearing in this country of New Zealand," he murmured in a low voice, "it means one is irrevocably lost!"

## Chapter IX *Thirty Miles North*

On February 7th, at six o'clock in the morning, the signal to depart was given by Glenarvan. The rain had stopped during the night. The sky, cushioned with small grayish clouds, blocked the sun's rays three miles above the ground. The moderate temperature made it possible to face the fatigues of a daytime journey.

Paganel had measured on the map a distance of eighty miles between the tip of Cahua and Auckland; it was an eight-day journey, at ten miles every twenty-four hours. But, instead of following the winding shores of the sea, it seemed better to him to reach, thirty miles away, the confluence of the Waikato and the Waipa, at the village of Ngarnavahia.

The "overland mail *track* ," a road—or rather, a path—accessible to cars, runs through this area, traversing a large part of the island from Napier on Hawke's Bay to Auckland. From there, it would be easy to reach Drury and rest in an excellent hotel highly recommended by the naturalist Hochstetter.

The travelers, each carrying their share of provisions, began to circumnavigate the shores of Aotea Bay. Prudently, they kept close to one another, and instinctively, with their rifles loaded, they scanned the rolling plains to the east. Paganel, his excellent map in hand, took an artist's delight in recording the accuracy of its smallest details.

For part of the day, the small group trod on sand composed of bivalve shell fragments, cuttlebone, and mixed in a large proportion with iron peroxide and nitrous oxide. A magnet brought near the ground would have instantly become coated with brilliant crystals.

On the shore caressed by the rising tide, a few sea creatures frolicked, seemingly unconcerned with fleeing. The seals, with their rounded heads, broad, curved foreheads, and expressive eyes, presented a gentle, even affectionate, countenance. It was understandable that fable, in its own poetic way, would have transformed these curious inhabitants of the sea into enchanting mermaids, even though their voices were merely a rather unmelodious grunt. These animals,

numerous on the coasts of New Zealand, are the object of a thriving trade. They are fished for their oil and their fur.

Among them stood three or four elephant seals, bluish-grey in color and twenty-five to thirty feet long. These enormous amphibians, lazily stretched out on thick beds of giant kelp, raised their erect trunks and grimacingly swished the rough bristles of their long, twisted whiskers, veritable corkscrews curled like a dandy's beard. Robert was amused to contemplate this interesting world when he exclaimed, quite surprised:

"Look! Those seals are eating pebbles!"

And indeed, several of these animals were swallowing the stones from the shore with gluttonous greed.

“By Jove! The fact is certain!” replied Paganel. “One cannot deny that these animals graze on the pebbles of the shore.”

"A peculiar food," said Robert, "and difficult to digest!"

“These amphibians don’t swallow stones for food, my boy, but to add weight. It’s a way to increase their specific gravity and sink easily to the bottom. Once back on land, they’ll return the stones without any fuss. You’ll see these ones dive beneath the waves.”

Soon, indeed, half a dozen seals, sufficiently weighted down, dragged themselves heavily along the shore and disappeared beneath the liquid element.

But Glenarvan could not waste precious time watching for their return to observe the unloading operation and, to Paganel's great regret, the interrupted march was resumed.

At ten o'clock, we stopped for lunch at the foot of large basalt rocks arranged like Celtic dolmens on the seashore. An oyster bed provided a large quantity of these mollusks. These oysters were small and of rather unpleasant taste. But, following Paganel's advice, Olbinett cooked them over hot coals, and, thus prepared, dozens followed dozens throughout the meal.

The stop over, we continued to follow the shores of the bay. On its jagged rocks, at the top of its cliffs, a whole world of seabirds had taken refuge: frigatebirds, boobies, gulls, vast albatrosses motionless at the tips of the sharp peaks.

At four o'clock in the evening, ten miles had been covered without difficulty or fatigue. The travelers asked to continue their journey until nightfall. At this point, the direction of the route had to be changed; they had to, by turning the foot of some mountains that appeared to the north, enter the Waipa Valley.

The ground in the distance appeared as vast prairies stretching into the distance, promising an easy walk. But the travelers, upon reaching the edge of these green fields, were sorely disappointed. The pasture gave way to a thicket of bushes with small white flowers, intertwined with the tall, countless ferns that the New Zealand landscape so favors. They had to force their way through these woody stems, and the difficulty was considerable. However, by eight o'clock in the evening, the first ridges of the Hakarihoata Ranges had been rounded, and the camp was set up without delay.

After a fourteen-mile trek, rest was certainly warranted. Besides, they had neither wagon nor tent, and it was at the foot of magnificent

Norfolk pines that everyone settled down to sleep. Blankets were plentiful and served to improvise beds.

Glenarvan took rigorous precautions for the night. He and his companions, well-armed, had to keep watch in pairs until daybreak. No fire was lit. These glowing barriers are useful against wild beasts, but New Zealand has neither tigers, nor lions, nor bears, no ferocious animals; the New Zealanders, it is true, make up for them amply. Besides, a fire would only have served to attract those two-legged jaguars.

In short, the night was good, apart from a few sand flies, "ngamu" in the native language, whose bite is very unpleasant, and a bold family of rats that nibbled away at the bags of provisions.

The next day, February 8th, Paganel awoke more confident and almost reconciled with the country. The Maori, whom he particularly feared, had not appeared, and these ferocious cannibals did not even threaten him in his dreams. He expressed his complete satisfaction to Glenarvan.

"I therefore think," he told him, "that this little walk will end without incident. This evening, we will have reached the confluence of the Waipa and the Waikato, and, having passed this point, an encounter with natives is little to fear on the road to Auckland."

"How far do we have to travel," asked Glenarvan, "to reach the confluence of the Waipa and the Waikato?"

—Fifteen miles, about the same distance we traveled yesterday.

—But we will be greatly delayed if these endless thickets continue to obstruct the paths.

—No, replied Paganel, we will follow the banks of the Waipa, and there, no more obstacles, but an easy path, on the contrary.

"Let's go then," replied Glenarvan, who saw the travelers ready to set off.

During the first hours of that day, the undergrowth further slowed their progress. Neither cart nor horses could have passed where the travelers did.

Their Australian vehicle was therefore not sorely missed. Until the day roads are carved through its forests of vegetation, New Zealand will be accessible only to pedestrians. The ferns, of which there are countless species, contribute with the same tenacity as the Maori to the defense of the national soil.

The small group therefore encountered a thousand difficulties in crossing the plains where the hills of Hakarihoata rise. But, before noon, they reached the banks of the Waipa and went up without difficulty towards the north along the banks of the river.

It was a charming valley, crisscrossed by small creeks with cool, clear waters that flowed merrily beneath the shrubs. New Zealand, according to the botanist Hooker, has produced to date two thousand plant species, five hundred of which are unique to it. Flowers are rare and lack subtle variations in color, and there is an almost complete scarcity of annual plants, but an abundance of lichens, grasses, and umbellifers.

A few large trees rose here and there out of the foreground of the dark greenery, scarlet-flowered "metrosideros", Norfolk pines, thujas with vertically compressed branches, and a kind of cypress, the "rimu", no less sad than its European counterparts; all these trunks were invaded by numerous varieties of ferns.

Among the branches of the large trees, on the surface of the shrubs, flitted and chattered a few cockatoos, the green "kakariki", with a red band under its throat, the "taupo", adorned with a fine pair of black sideburns, and a parrot as big as a duck, reddish in plumage, with a brilliant underwing, which naturalists have nicknamed the "Southern Nestor".

The major and Robert were able, without leaving their companions, to shoot some snipe and partridges that were taking shelter under the low trees of the plains.

Olbinett, in order to save time, took care of plucking them on the way.

Paganel, for his part, less concerned with the nutritional value of game, would have liked to capture some bird peculiar to New Zealand. The naturalist's curiosity silenced the traveler's appetite within him. His memory, if it did not deceive him, reminded him of the strange habits of the natives' "tui," sometimes called "the mocker" for its incessant sneering and sometimes "the priest" because it wears a white flap over its black plumage like a cassock.

"This *tui* ," Paganel said to the major, "gets so fat during the winter that it makes him sick. He can no longer fly. So, he tears at his breast with his beak, in order to get rid of his fat and make himself lighter. Doesn't that seem strange to you, Nabbs?"

"So peculiar," replied the major, "that I don't believe a word of it!"

And Paganel, to his great regret, was unable to seize a single specimen of these birds and show the incredulous major the bloody scarifications on their breasts.

But he was luckier with a bizarre animal, which, pursued by man, cat, and dog, had fled to uninhabited lands and was tending to disappear from the Zeeland fauna. Robert, snooping like a true ferret, discovered in a nest made of intertwined roots a pair of wingless and tailless hens, with four toes on each foot, a long woodcock's beak, and a mane of white feathers covering their entire body. Strange animals, which seemed to mark the transition from egg-laying to mammalian life.

This was the Zeeland "kiwi," the "apterix australis" of naturalists, which feeds indiscriminately on larvae, insects, worms, or seeds. This bird is unique to the country. It has barely been introduced into the zoos of Europe. Its half-formed shape and comical movements have always attracted the attention of travelers, and during the great exploration of Oceania by the *Astrolabe* and the *Zélée* , Dumont d'Urville was primarily tasked by the Academy of Sciences with bringing back a specimen of these singular birds. But, despite the rewards promised to the natives, he was unable to procure a single live kiwi.

Paganel, delighted by such good fortune, tied his two hens together and bravely carried them off with the intention of presenting them as a gift to the Jardin des Plantes in Paris. " *Given by Mr. Jacques Paganel* ," he could already read this enticing inscription on the most beautiful cage in the establishment, the confident geographer!

However, the small group descended the banks of the Waipa without tiring. The land was deserted; no trace of natives, no path to indicate the presence of man on these plains. The river waters flowed between tall bushes or slipped over long stretches of sand. The eye could then wander to the small mountains that closed off the valley to the east. With their strange shapes, their profiles shrouded in a deceptive mist, they resembled gigantic animals, worthy of antediluvian times. They looked like a whole herd of enormous cetaceans, seized by sudden petrification. An essentially volcanic character emanated from these tormented masses. New Zealand is, in fact, only the recent product of plutonic activity. Its emergence above the waters is constantly increasing. Some points have risen by a fathom in the last twenty years.

The fire still runs through its entrails, shakes it, convulses it, and escapes in many places through the mouths of geysers and the craters of volcanoes.

By four o'clock in the afternoon, nine miles had been briskly covered. According to the map Paganel was constantly consulting, the confluence of the Waipa and Waikato rivers should be less than five miles away. There, the road to Auckland passed. There, the camp would be established for the night. As for the fifty miles separating them from the capital, two or three days would suffice to cover them, and eight hours at most, if Glenarvan met the mail coach, which runs twice a month between Auckland and Hawke's Bay.

"So," said Glenarvan, "we will be forced to camp again tonight?"

—Yes, replied Paganel, but, I hope, for the last time.

—So much the better, for these are hard trials for Lady Helena and Mary Grant.

"And they bear it without complaint," added John Mangles. "But, if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Paganel, you mentioned a village situated at the confluence of the two rivers."

"Yes," replied the geographer, "it is marked on Johnston's map. It is Ngarnavahia, about two miles below the confluence."

—Well! Couldn't we stay there for the night? Lady Helena and Miss Grant wouldn't hesitate to walk two miles further to find a reasonably suitable hotel.

"A hotel!" cried Paganel, "a hotel in a Maori village! But not even an inn, nor a cabaret! This village is nothing but a collection of native huts, and far from seeking refuge there, my advice is to avoid it prudently."

"Always your fears, Paganel!" said Glenarvan.

“My dear lord, it is better to be wary than trusting of the Maori. I don’t know what their relationship with the English is like, whether the uprising has been suppressed or is victorious, or if we are not about to find ourselves in the middle of a war. Now, modesty aside, people of our station would be valuable catches, and I have no desire to experience Zeelandic hospitality against my will. I therefore think it wise to avoid the village of Ngarnavahia, to skirt around it, to avoid any encounter with the natives. Once we reach Drury, it will be different, and there our valiant companions will be able to recover at their leisure from the fatigues of the journey.”

The geographer's opinion prevailed. Lady Helena preferred to spend one last night outdoors and not expose her companions. Neither she nor Mary Grant asked to stop, and they continued along the riverbanks.

Two hours later, the first shadows of evening began to descend from the mountains. Before disappearing below the western horizon, the sun had taken advantage of a sudden break in the clouds to cast a few late rays. The distant peaks to the east were crimson with the last embers of the day.

It was like a quick greeting to the travelers.

Glenarvan and his companions quickened their pace. They knew how brief twilight was at this already high latitude, and how quickly night could engulf them. Their goal was to reach the confluence of the two rivers before complete darkness. But a thick fog rose from the ground, making it very difficult to find their way.

Fortunately, hearing replaced sight, which the darkness rendered useless. Soon, a more pronounced murmur from the waters indicated the confluence of the two rivers in a single channel. At eight o'clock, the small group arrived at the point where the Waipa merges with the Waikato, not without a few roars from the crashing waves.

"The Waikato is there," cried Paganel, "and the road to Auckland goes up along its right bank.

"We'll see it tomorrow," replied the major. "Let's camp here. It seems to me that those deeper shadows are those of a small thicket of trees that grew there expressly to shelter us. Let's have supper and sleep."

“Let’s have supper,” said Paganel, “but of biscuits and dried meat, without lighting a fire. We arrived here incognito, let’s try to leave the same way! Fortunately, this fog makes us invisible.”

The clump of trees was reached, and everyone complied with the geographer's instructions. The cold supper was eaten in silence, and soon a deep sleep overcame the travelers, tired from a fifteen-mile march.

## Chapter X *The National River*

The next day, at daybreak, a fairly dense fog crept heavily over the river. Some of the vapors that saturated the air had condensed as it cooled, covering the surface of the water with a thick cloud. But the sun's rays soon pierced these vesicular masses, which melted under the gaze of the radiant sun. The misty banks cleared, and the Waikato River appeared in all its morning beauty.

A slender, elongated tongue of land, bristling with shrubs, ended abruptly at the confluence of the two streams. The more impetuous waters of the Waipa pushed back the waters of the Waikato for a quarter of a mile before merging with them; but the river, powerful and calm, soon overcame the raging river, and carried it peacefully along its course to the reservoir of the Pacific.

When the vapors rose, a boat appeared, going up the current of the Waikato.

It was a canoe seventy feet long, five feet wide, three feet deep, with a raised bow like a Venetian gondola, and carved entirely from the trunk of a *kahikatea fir tree* . A bed of dry ferns lined its bottom. Eight oars at

the bow propelled it across the water's surface, while a man, seated at the stern, steered it with a movable paddle.

This man was a tall native, about forty-five years old, with a broad chest, muscular limbs, and strong hands and feet. His domed forehead, furrowed with thick wrinkles, his violent gaze, and his sinister countenance made him a formidable figure.

He was a Maori chief, and of high rank. This was evident from the fine, tightly packed tattoos that crisscrossed his body and face. From the wings of his aquiline nose sprang two black spirals that, encircling his yellow eyes, met on his forehead and disappeared into his magnificent hair. His mouth, with its gleaming teeth, and his chin were hidden beneath regular, variegated patterns, whose elegant swirls wound their way down to his robust chest.

Tattooing, or "moko" as New Zealanders call it, is a high mark of distinction. Only those who have valiantly participated in battles are worthy of these honorary marks. Slaves and commoners cannot aspire to it. Famous chiefs are recognized by the refinement, precision, and nature of their designs, which often depict animals on their bodies. Some undergo the painful moko procedure up to five times. The more illustrious one is, the more "illustrious" one becomes in New Zealand.

Dumont-d'Urville provided some curious details about this custom. He rightly observed that the moko served as a substitute for the coat of arms of which certain families are so vain in Europe. But he noted a difference between these two distinguishing marks:

This is because the coats of arms of Europeans often only attest to the individual merit of the one who first obtained them, without proving

anything about the merit of his children; whereas the individual coats of arms of New Zealanders authentically testify that, in order to have the right to bear them, they had to show extraordinary personal courage.

Moreover, Maori tattoos, regardless of the esteem in which they are held, have an undeniable purpose. They give the skin an added thickness, allowing it to withstand the harsh weather of the seasons and the incessant bites of mosquitoes.

As for the chief who was leading the boat, there was no doubt about his design. The sharp albatross bone, which is used by Maori tattoo artists, had, in close and deep lines, furrowed his face five times.

This was its fifth edition, and it showed in his haughty expression.

His body, draped in a vast mat of "phormium" trimmed with dog skins, was girded with a loincloth stained with blood from the last battles.

Her ears were adorned with green jade earrings on their elongated lobes, and around her neck, necklaces of "pounamous," a type of sacred stone to which the Zeelanders attach some superstitious significance, shimmered. Beside her lay an English-made rifle and a "patou-patou," a kind of double-edged axe, emerald-colored and eighteen inches long.

Beside him, nine warriors of lesser rank, but armed and fierce-looking, some still suffering from recent wounds, remained perfectly still, wrapped in their phormium cloaks. Three wild mining dogs lay at their feet. The eight oarsmen at the bow appeared to be servants or

slaves of the chief. They swam vigorously. Thus, the boat made considerable progress up the otherwise slow-moving Waikato River.

In the center of this long canoe, with their feet tied but their hands free, ten European prisoners stood huddled together.

They were Glenarvan and Lady Helena, Mary Grant, Robert, Paganel, the major, John Mangles, the *steward* , the two sailors.

The previous evening, the entire small group, misled by the thick fog, had camped amidst a large gathering of natives. Around midnight, the travelers, surprised in their sleep, were taken prisoner and then brought aboard the boat. They had not been mistreated until then, but their attempts to resist would have been futile. Their weapons and ammunition were in the hands of the savages, and their own bullets would have quickly brought them down.

They soon learned, by grasping a few English words spoken by the natives, that these tribesmen, driven back by British troops, defeated and decimated, were returning to the upper Waikato districts. The Maori chief, after a stubborn resistance, his principal warriors massacred by the soldiers of the 42nd Regiment, was returning to make another appeal to the river tribes to join the indomitable William Thompson, who was still fighting against the conquerors. This chief was named Kai-Koumou, a sinister name in the native language, meaning "he who eats the limbs of his enemy." He was brave and audacious, but his cruelty matched his valor. No mercy could be expected from him. His name was well known to the English soldiers, and a price had just been put on his head by the Governor of New Zealand.

This terrible blow struck Lord Glenarvan just as he was about to reach the long-desired port of Auckland and return to Europe. Yet, judging by his cool, calm face, one would have been unable to guess the depth of his anguish. For Glenarvan, in grave circumstances, rose to the occasion. He felt he had to be the strength, the example, for his wife and companions—he, the husband, the leader; ready, moreover, to be the first to die for the common good when circumstances demanded it. Deeply religious, he refused to despair of God's justice in the face of the sanctity of his undertaking, and, amidst the perils that piled up along his path, he did not regret the generous impulse that had drawn him to these wild lands.

His companions were worthy of him; they shared his noble thoughts, and, seeing their calm and proud countenances, one would not have believed them drawn toward such a supreme catastrophe. Moreover, by common agreement and on Glenarvan's advice, they had resolved to feign superb indifference toward the natives. It was the only way to command respect from these fierce natures. The savages, in general, and the Maori in particular, possess a certain sense of dignity which they never relinquish. They respect those who earn respect through their composure and courage.

Glenarvan knew that by acting in this way, he was sparing himself and his companions unnecessary mistreatment.

Since leaving the camp, the natives, taciturn like all savages, had barely spoken among themselves. However, from a few words exchanged, Glenarvan recognized that they were familiar with the English language. He therefore resolved to question the Zeeland chief about their fate.

Addressing Kai-Koumou, he said to him in a voice free from all fear:

"Where are you taking us, chief?"

Kai-Koumou looked at him coldly without answering.

"What do you intend to do with us?" Glenarvan continued.

Kai-Koumou's eyes flashed quickly, and in a deep voice, he replied:

"Exchange you, if your people want you; kill you, if they refuse."

Glenarvan asked for nothing more, but hope returned to his heart. Undoubtedly, some Maori army chiefs had fallen into English hands, and the natives wanted to try to recapture them through an exchange. There was, therefore, a chance of salvation, and the situation was not hopeless.

However, the canoe was quickly making its way upriver. Paganel, whose volatile temperament readily swung him from one extreme to the other, had regained all hope. He told himself that the Maori were sparing them the trouble of going to the English posts, and that this was all to the good. So, resigned to his fate, he followed the course of the Waikato River on his map, tracing it through the plains and valleys of the province. Lady Helena and Mary Grant, suppressing their fears, were conversing in hushed voices with Glenarvan, and the most astute observer of faces could not have detected the anguish in their hearts.

The Waikato is New Zealand's national river. The Māori are proud and protective of it, just as the Germans are of the Rhine and the Slavs of the Danube. In its two-hundred-mile course, it waters the most beautiful regions of the North Island, from Wellington Province to Auckland

Province. It gave its name to all those riverine tribes who, indomitable and untamed, rose up en masse against invaders.

The waters of this river are still almost untouched by any foreign presence. They only part before the prows of island canoes. Hardly any daring tourist has ever ventured between these sacred banks. Access to the upper Waikato seems forbidden to European outsiders.

Paganel was aware of the natives' veneration for this great Zeeland artery. He knew that English and German naturalists had scarcely explored it beyond its confluence with the Waipa.

How far would Kai-Koumou's whims take his captives? He could not have guessed, if the word "taupo", frequently repeated between the chief and his warriors, had not aroused his attention.

He consulted his map and saw that the name " *taupo"* referred to a lake famous in geographical annals, carved out of the most mountainous part of the island, at the southern tip of Auckland province. The Waikato River flows from this lake, having crossed its entire width. From the confluence to the lake, the river stretches for approximately one hundred and twenty miles.

Paganel, speaking in French to John Mangles so as not to be understood by the natives, asked him to estimate the speed of the canoe. John estimated it at approximately three miles per hour.

"Then," replied the geographer, "if we stop during the night, our journey to the lake will last almost four days."

"But where are the English posts located?" asked Glenarvan.

"It's difficult to know!" replied Paganel. "However, the war must have spread to the province of Taranaki, and, in all likelihood, the troops are massed on the lake side, on the back side of the mountains, where the center of the insurrection is concentrated."

"God willing!" said Lady Helena.

Glenarvan cast a sorrowful glance at his young wife, Mary Grant, exposed to the mercy of these fierce natives and carried off to a wild land, far from any human intervention. But he saw himself being watched by Kai-Koumou, and, out of prudence, not wanting to let him guess that one of the captives was his wife, he suppressed his thoughts and observed the riverbanks with perfect indifference.

The boat, half a mile upstream from the confluence, had passed without stopping by the former residence of King Potatau. No other canoe plyed the river's waters. A few huts, spaced far apart along the banks, bore witness by their dilapidated state to the horrors of a recent war.

The riverside countryside seemed abandoned, the banks of the river deserted. Only a few members of the waterfowl family enlivened this sad solitude. Now and then, the taparunga, a wading bird with black wings, a white belly, and a red beak, would take flight on its long legs. Now and then, three species of herons—the grey matuku, a kind of bittern with a dull expression, and the magnificent kotuku, white in plumage, yellow on its beak, and black on its feet—peacefully watched the native boat pass by. Where the sloping banks revealed a certain depth of water, the kingfisher, the kotaré of the Maori, would watch for the small eels that wriggle by the millions in the Zeeland rivers. Where

the bushes curved over the river, proud hoopoes, rellecs, and purple swamphens performed their morning preening under the first rays of sunlight. All these winged creatures peacefully enjoyed the leisure afforded them by the absence of men, driven out or decimated by war.

During this first part of its course, the Waikato flowed broadly through vast plains. But upstream, the hills, then the mountains, would soon narrow the valley where its bed had been carved. Ten miles above the confluence, Paganel's map indicated the shore of Kirikiriroa on the left bank, which was indeed located there. Kai-Koumou did not stop. He had the prisoners given their own food, taken from the plundered encampment. As for himself, his warriors, and his slaves, they were content with the native fare: edible ferns, the "pteris esculenta" of botanists, baked roots, and "kapanas," potatoes cultivated abundantly on both islands. No animal matter appeared in their meals, and the captives' dried meat seemed to inspire no desire in them.

At three o'clock, a few mountains rose up on the right bank, the Pokaroa Ranges, which resembled a dismantled curtain wall. Perched on some of the sheer ridges were ruined "pahs," ancient fortifications erected by Maori engineers in impregnable positions. They looked like large eagles' nests.

The sun was about to disappear behind the horizon when the canoe struck a bank cluttered with the pumice stones that the Waikato River, emerging from volcanic mountains, carries along in its course. A few trees grew there, which seemed suitable for sheltering a camp. Kai-Koumou had his prisoners disembarked; the men's hands were bound, the women remained free; all were placed in the center of the camp,

which was surrounded by burning braziers forming an impenetrable barrier of fire.

Before Kai-Koumou informed his captives of his intention to exchange them, Glenarvan and John Mangles had discussed ways to regain their freedom. What they could not attempt on the boat, they hoped to try on land, at the time of encampment, with the favorable conditions of nightfall.

But, since the meeting between Glenarvan and the Zeeland leader, it seemed wise to abstain. They had to wait. It was the most prudent course of action.

The exchange offered chances of salvation that an armed attack or flight through these unknown lands did not present.

Certainly, many events could arise that would delay or even prevent such negotiations; but the best course was still to await their outcome. Indeed, what could a dozen unarmed men do against thirty well-armed savages? Glenarvan, moreover, surmised that the Kai-Koumou tribe had lost some highly valued chief whom they were particularly keen to regain, and he was not mistaken.

The next day, the boat went up the river with renewed speed. At ten o'clock, it stopped for a moment at the confluence of the Pohaiwhenna, a small river that came windingly from the plains on the right bank.

There, a canoe, manned by ten natives, joined Kai-Koumou's boat. The warriors barely exchanged the greeting of arrival, the "aïré maira," meaning "come here in good health," and the two canoes proceeded together. The newcomers had recently fought against the English

troops. This was evident in their tattered clothing, their bloodied weapons, and the wounds that still bled beneath their rags.

They were dark and taciturn. With the indifference natural to all savage peoples, they paid no attention to the Europeans.

At noon, the peaks of Maungatotari came into view in the west. The Waikato Valley began to narrow. There, the river, deeply entrenched, raged with the force of a rapid. But the strength of the natives, reinforced and regulated by a song that kept time with the strokes of the oars, propelled the boat through the foaming waters. The rapid was overcome, and the Waikato resumed its slow course, broken every few miles by the angle of its banks.

Towards evening, Kai-Koumou landed at the foot of the mountains, whose first foothills dropped steeply to narrow riverbanks. There, about twenty natives, having disembarked from their canoes, were making preparations for the night. Fires blazed under the trees. A chief, Kai-Koumou's equal, advanced with measured steps, and, rubbing his nose against Kai-Koumou's, gave him the cordial greeting of the "chongui." The prisoners were placed in the center of the camp and guarded with extreme vigilance.

The following morning, the long journey up the Waikato River resumed. More boats arrived via the river's smaller tributaries. Some sixty warriors, clearly the fugitives from the recent uprising, were gathered there, and, more or less battered by British bullets, they were making their way back to the mountain districts. Occasionally, a song rose from the canoes as they traveled in formation. A native would intone the patriotic ode of the mysterious "Pihé," *papa ra ti wati tidi i*

*dounga nei* ... the national anthem that roused the Maori to the war of independence. The singer's voice, full and resonant, awakened the echoes of the mountains, and after each verse, the natives, beating their chests, which resonated like a drum, would join in the chorus of the warlike stanza. Then, with a renewed burst of rowing, the canoes would turn against the current and skim across the surface of the water.

A curious phenomenon occurred that day, marking the river's navigation. Around four o'clock, the boat, without hesitation or delaying its course, guided by the captain's firm hand, plunged through a narrow valley. Whirlpools crashed fiercely against numerous islets, each a potential hazard.

More than ever, in this strange passage of the Waikato, there was no room for capsizing, for its banks offered no refuge. Anyone who set foot on the boiling mud of the shores would inevitably have been lost.

Indeed, the river flowed between these hot springs, long known to attract tourists. Iron oxide colored the silt on the banks a vivid red, where one would not have encountered a fathom of solid tufa underfoot. The air was saturated with a very penetrating sulfurous odor. The natives were unaffected, but the captives were seriously inconvenienced by the miasmas exhaled from the fissures in the ground and the bubbles that burst under the pressure of the internal gases. But while the sense of smell struggled to adapt to these emanations, the eye could not help but admire this imposing spectacle.

The boats ventured into the heart of a cloud of white vapor. Its dazzling plumes rose in a dome-like cascade above the river. Along its banks, a hundred geysers, some spouting masses of steam, others

gushing forth in liquid columns, varied their effects like the jets and cascades of a basin, orchestrated by human hands. It seemed as if some engineer were directing the intermittent flow of these springs at will. The water and vapor, mingling in the air, shimmered in the sunlight.

Here, the Waikato River flowed over a shifting bed that constantly boiled under the influence of subterranean fires. Nearby, to the east, on the shores of Lake Rotorua, roared the hot springs and steaming waterfalls of Rotomahana and Tetarata, glimpsed by a few intrepid travelers. This region is riddled with geysers, craters, and fumaroles.

This is where the excess gases escape which could not find an outlet through the insufficient valves of Tongariro and Wakari, the only active volcanoes in New Zealand.

For two miles, the native canoes glided beneath this canopy of vapors, enveloped in the warm swirls that rolled across the surface of the water; then, the sulphurous smoke dissipated, and pure air, drawn in by the swift current, came to refresh their panting chests. The region of the springs had passed.

Before the end of the day, two more rapids were navigated under the vigorous paddling of the natives: Hipapatua and Tamatea. In the evening, Kai-Koumou camped one hundred miles from the confluence of the Waipa and Waikato rivers. The river, curving eastward, then flowed southward into Lake Taupo, like a vast jet of water into a basin.

The next day, Jacques Paganel, consulting the map, recognized on the right bank Mount Taubara, which rises three thousand feet into the air.

At noon, the entire procession of boats emerged through a widening of the river into Lake Taupo, and the natives waved greetings to a piece of cloth that the wind unfurled at the top of a hut. It was the national flag.

## Chapter XI *Lake Taupo*

An unfathomable chasm, twenty-five miles long and twenty miles wide, was once formed, long before historical times, by a collapse of caverns in the middle of the trachytic lavas in the center of the island.

Waters rushing down from the surrounding peaks have flooded this enormous cavity. The chasm has become a lake, but it remains an abyss, and probes are still powerless to measure its depth.

Such is this strange Lake Taupo, raised to 1250 feet above sea level, and dominated by a cirque of mountains 400 fathoms high. To the west, sheer cliffs of great size; to the north, a few distant peaks crowned with small woods; to the east, a wide beach crisscrossed by a road decorated with pumice stones that gleam beneath the lattice of bushes; to the south, volcanic cones behind a foreground of forests majestically frame this vast expanse of water whose resounding storms rival the cyclones of the ocean.

The entire region boils like a vast cauldron, suspended over subterranean flames. The land trembles under the caress of the central fire.

Hot vapors filter through in many places. The earth's crust splits into violent cracks like an overbaked cake, and this plateau would undoubtedly be engulfed in an incandescent furnace if, twelve miles

away, the trapped vapors did not find an outlet through the craters of Tongariro.

From the north shore, this volcano appeared plumed with smoke and flames, rising above small fire-producing mounds. Tongariro seemed to be part of a rather complicated orographic system.

Behind him, Mount Ruapahou, isolated in the plain, raised its head nine thousand feet into the air, lost amidst the clouds. No mortal has set foot on its inaccessible cone; the human eye has never plumbed the depths of its crater, while, three times in twenty years, Messrs. Bidwill and Dyson, and recently Mr. De Hochstetter, have measured the more accessible peaks of Tongariro.

These volcanoes have their legends, and in any other circumstance, Paganel would certainly have shared them with his companions. He would have recounted the dispute that arose one day between Tongariro and Taranaki, then his neighbor and friend, over a woman. Tongariro, hot-headed like all volcanoes, flew into a rage and struck Taranaki. Defeated and humiliated, Taranaki fled through the Whanganni Valley, dropping two chunks of mountain along the way, and reached the shores of the sea, where it stands alone under the name of Mount Egmont.

But Paganel was hardly in the mood to tell stories, nor were his friends in the mood to listen. They silently observed the northeast shore of Lake Taupo, where the most disappointing twist of fate had just led them. The mission established by Reverend Grace at Pukawa, on the western shores of the lake, no longer existed. The minister had been driven by the war far from the main center of the insurrection.

The prisoners were alone, abandoned at the mercy of Maori eager for revenge, and precisely in this wild part of the island where Christianity has never penetrated.

Kai-Koumou, leaving the waters of the Waikato, crossed the small creek that funnels the river, rounded a sharp promontory, and reached the eastern shore of the lake, at the foot of the first undulations of Mount Manga, a large, three-hundred-fate-high mound. There, fields of "phormium," the precious flax of New Zealand, stretched out. It is the "harakeké" of the natives. Nothing in this useful plant is to be scorned. Its flower provides a kind of excellent honey; its stem produces a gummy substance that replaces wax or starch; its leaf, even more accommodating, lends itself to numerous transformations: fresh, it serves as paper; dried, it makes excellent tinder; cut, it is transformed into ropes, cables, and nets; Divided into filaments and scutched, it becomes a blanket or coat, a mat or loincloth, and, dyed red or black, it clothes the most elegant Maoris.

Thus, this precious phormium is found everywhere on both islands, along the seashore, rivers, and lake banks. Here, its wild bushes covered entire fields; its reddish-brown flowers, resembling agave, bloomed everywhere beyond the impenetrable tangle of its long leaves, which formed a trophy of sharp blades. Graceful nectar-birds, frequenting the phormium fields, flew in large flocks and feasted on the honeyed sap of the flowers.

In the waters of the lake paddled flocks of ducks with blackish plumage, mottled with grey and green, and which were easily domesticated.

A quarter of a mile away, on a mountain escarpment, a pah appeared, a Maori stronghold situated in an impregnable position. The prisoners, disembarked one by one with their hands and feet free, were led there by the warriors. The path leading to the stronghold crossed fields of phormium and a cluster of beautiful trees: kaikatea, evergreen with red berries; dracaena australis, the natives' ti, whose crown is a good substitute for cabbage palm; and huious, used to dye cloth black. Large, metallic-looking doves, ash-crested doves, and a flock of starlings with reddish wattles took flight as the natives approached.

After a rather long detour, Glenarvan, Lady Helena, Mary Grant and their companions arrived inside the *pah* .

This fortress was defended by a first enclosure of solid palisades, fifteen feet high; a second line of stakes, then a wicker fence pierced with loopholes, enclosed the second enclosure, that is to say the *pah plateau* , on which stood Maori constructions and about forty huts arranged symmetrically.

Upon arriving, the captives were horrified by the sight of the heads adorning the posts of the second enclosure. Lady Helena and Mary Grant averted their eyes with more disgust than horror.

These heads had belonged to enemy leaders who fell in battle, whose bodies served as food for the victors.

The geographer recognized them as such, by their hollow eye sockets and lack of eyes.

Indeed, the chiefs' eyes are devoured; the head, prepared in the native manner, emptied of its brain and stripped of all epidermis, the nose

held in place by small boards, the nostrils stuffed with phormium, the mouth and eyelids sewn shut, is put in the oven and subjected to a thirty-hour fumigation.

Thus arranged, it can be preserved indefinitely without alteration or wrinkle, and forms trophies of victory.

The Maori often preserve the heads of their own chiefs; but in this case, the eye remains in its socket and gazes out. New Zealanders display these remains with pride; they offer them for the admiration of young warriors and pay them tribute of veneration through solemn ceremonies.

But, in the *pah* of Kai-Koumou, only the heads of enemies adorned this horrible museum, and there, no doubt, more than one Englishman, with an empty eye socket, augmented the collection of the Maori chief.

Kai-Koumou's hut, nestled among several smaller dwellings, stood at the far end of the *pah* , overlooking a wide open space that Europeans would have called "the battlefield." This hut was an assemblage of stakes insulated with interwoven branches and lined internally with phormium mats. Twenty feet long, fifteen feet wide, and ten feet high, Kai-Koumou's dwelling contained three thousand cubic feet of space. No more was needed to house a Zeeland chieftain.

A single opening provided access to the hut; a hinged door, made of thick plant fibers, served as a door. Above, the roof extended in a kind of impluvium. A few carved figures at the ends of the rafters adorned the hut, and the "wharepuni" or portal offered visitors a display of foliage, symbolic figures, monsters, and contorted scrolls—a curious jumble born from the chisel of native ornamentalists.

Inside the hut, the earthen floor was raised half a foot above the ground.

A few reed hurdles and mattresses of dried bracken covered with a mat woven from the long, flexible leaves of the cattail served as beds. In the center, a stone hole formed the hearth, and in the roof, a second hole served as a chimney. The smoke, when it was thick enough, would finally decide to take advantage of this opening, but not before depositing a varnish of the finest black on the walls of the dwelling.

Beside the hut stood the storehouses containing the chief's provisions: his harvest of phormium, potatoes, taro, and edible ferns, and the ovens where these various foods were cooked on hot stones. Further on, in small enclosures, pigs and goats, the few remaining descendants of the useful animals acclimatized by Captain Cook, were kept. Dogs ran here and there, searching for their meager food.

They were quite poorly cared for animals that are used daily to feed the Maori.

Glenarvan and his companions had taken in the whole scene at a glance. They waited by an empty hut for the chief's pleasure, not without being subjected to insults from a group of old women.

This band of harpies surrounded them, threatening them with their fists, howling and shouting. A few words of English that escaped their thick lips clearly revealed that they were demanding immediate revenge.

Amidst the shouts and threats, Lady Helena, outwardly calm, affected a composure that could not possibly reside in her heart. This

courageous woman, to preserve Lord Glenarvan's composure, restrained herself with heroic effort. Poor Mary Grant, meanwhile, felt faint, and John Mangles stood by her, ready to die defending her. Her companions reacted to this deluge of invective in various ways, some indifferent like the major, others consumed by growing irritation like Paganel.

Glenarvan, wanting to spare Lady Helena the assault of these old hags, walked straight to Kai-Koumou, and pointing to the hideous group: "Chase them away," he said.

The Maori chief stared fixedly at his prisoner without replying; then, with a gesture, he silenced the howling horde. Glenarvan bowed in thanks and slowly returned to his place among his people.

At that moment, about a hundred New Zealanders were gathered in the *pah* , old men, grown men, young men, some calm but somber, waiting for Kai-Koumou's orders, others giving themselves over to all the training of violent pain; these were mourning their relatives or friends who had fallen in the last battles.

Kai-Koumou, of all the chiefs who rose at William Thompson's voice, was the only one returning to the lake districts, and he was the first to inform his tribe of the defeat of the national uprising, beaten down in the plains of Lower Waikato. Of the two hundred warriors who, under his command, rushed to the defense of the land, one hundred and fifty were missing upon the return.

If some were prisoners of the invaders, how many, lying on the battlefield, would never return to the land of their ancestors!

This explained the profound desolation that struck the tribe upon Kai-Koumou's arrival. Nothing had yet leaked out about the latest defeat, and this disastrous news had just broken.

Among savages, emotional pain is always expressed through physical displays. Thus, the relatives and friends of dead warriors, especially the women, would tear at their faces and shoulders with sharp shells. Blood spurted out and mingled with their tears. The deep incisions marked their profound despair.

The unfortunate Zeeland women, bloodied and deranged, were a horrible sight.

Another, deeply troubling, concern for the natives further deepened their despair. Not only was the relative, the friend they mourned, gone, but their bones were also missing from the family tomb. In Maori religion, the possession of these remains is considered essential for the destinies of the afterlife; not the perishable flesh, but the bones, which are carefully collected, cleaned, scraped, polished, even varnished, and finally placed in the "udupa," meaning "house of glory." These tombs are adorned with wooden statues that perfectly reproduce the deceased's tattoos. But today, the tombs would remain empty, the religious ceremonies would not be performed, and the bones spared by wild dogs would lie unburied on the battlefield.

Then the signs of pain intensified. The women's threats were followed by the men's curses against the Europeans. Insults erupted, gestures became more violent. Cries were about to give way to acts of brutality.

Kai-Koumou, fearing he would be overwhelmed by the fanatics of his tribe, had his captives led to a sacred site located at the other end of the

*pah* on a steep plateau. This hut was built against a high hill, about a hundred feet above it, which ended in a rather steep embankment on this side of the entrenchment. In this "waré-atoua," consecrated house, the priests or *arikis* taught the Zeelanders about a god in three persons: the father, the son, and the bird or spirit.

The hut, vast and well enclosed, contained the holy and chosen food that Maoui-Ranga-Rangui eats from the mouths of his priests.

There, the captives, momentarily sheltered from the native fury, lay down on mats of phormium. Lady Helena, her strength exhausted, her moral energy defeated, surrendered herself into her husband's arms.

Glenarvan, pressing her to his chest, kept repeating: "Courage, my dear Helena, heaven will not abandon us!"

Robert, barely locked in, hoisted himself onto Wilson's shoulders and managed to slip his head through a gap between the roof and the wall, where strings of amulets hung. From there, his gaze encompassed the entire expanse of the *pah* as far as Kai-Koumou's hut.

"They are gathered around the chief," he said in a low voice... "They are waving their arms... They are shouting... Kai-Koumou wants to speak..."

The child was silent for a few minutes, then he continued:

"Kai-Koumou speaks… The savages calm down… They listen to him…"

"Obviously," said the major, "this chief has a personal interest in protecting us. He wants to exchange his prisoners for chiefs from his tribe! But will his warriors agree to that?"

“Yes!… They’re listening to him…” Robert continued. “They’re dispersing… Some are returning to their huts… Others are leaving the entrenchment…”

"Are you telling the truth?" exclaimed the major.

"Yes, Mr. Mac Nabbs," replied Robert. "Kai-Koumou remained alone with the warriors from his boat. Ah! One of them is heading towards our hut."

“Come down, Robert,” said Glenarvan.

At that moment, Lady Helena, who had gotten up, seized her husband's arm.

"Edward," she said firmly, "neither Mary Grant nor I must fall alive into the hands of these savages!"

And, having said these words, she handed Glenarvan a loaded revolver.

"A weapon!" cried Glenarvan, a flash of light illuminating his eyes.

—Yes! The Maori don't search their prisoners! But this weapon is for us, Edward, not for them!…

"Glenarvan," Mac Nabbs said quickly, "hide that revolver! It's not time yet…"

The revolver disappeared under the lord's clothes.

The mat that closed the entrance to the hut was lifted. A native appeared.

He signaled to the prisoners to follow him.

Glenarvan and his people, in a tight group, crossed the *pah* , and stopped in front of Kai-Koumou.

Gathered around this chief were the principal warriors of his tribe. Among them was the Maori whose boat joined Kai-Koumou's at the confluence of the Pohaiwhenna River on the Waikato. He was a vigorous man of forty, with a fierce and cruel expression. His name was Kara-Tété, meaning "the irascible one" in the Zeelandic language. Kai-Koumou treated him with a certain deference, and the fineness of his tattoo indicated that Kara-Tété held a high rank in the tribe. However, an observer would have guessed that there was rivalry between these two chiefs. The major observed that Kara-Tété's influence overshadowed Kai-Koumou. They both commanded these important Waikato tribes with equal power. Also, during this interview, although Kai-Koumou's mouth smiled, his eyes betrayed a deep enmity.

Kai-Koumou questioned Glenarvan:

"Are you English?" he asked him.

"Yes," replied the lord without hesitation, "because this nationality should make an exchange easier."

—And your companions? said Kai-Koumou.

—My companions are English like me. We are travelers, shipwrecked. But, if you insist on knowing, we did not take part in the war.

"It doesn't matter!" Kara-Tété replied brutally. "Every Englishman is our enemy. Yours invaded our island! They burned our villages!"

"They were wrong!" replied Glenarvan in a grave voice. "I tell you this because I believe it, and not because I am in your power."

“Listen,” Kai-Koumou continued, “the Tohonga, the high priest of Nouï-Atoua, has fallen into the hands of your brothers; he is a prisoner of the Pakekas. Our god commands us to ransom his life. I would have liked to tear out your heart, I would have liked your head and the heads of your companions to hang eternally from the posts of this palisade! But Nouï-Atoua has spoken.”

As he spoke, Kai-Koumou, who had been in control of himself until then, trembled with anger, and his face was filled with a fierce exaltation.

Then, after a few moments, he continued more coldly: "Do you think the English would trade our Tohonga for you?"

Glenarvan hesitated to answer, and observed the Maori chief attentively.

"I don't know," he said, after a moment of silence.

"Speak," Kai-Koumou continued. "Is your life worth the life of our Tohonga?"

“No,” replied Glenarvan. “I am neither a chief nor a priest among my people!”

Paganel, stunned by this answer, looked at Glenarvan with profound astonishment.

Kai-Koumou also seemed surprised.

"So, you have doubts?" he said.

"I don't know," Glenarvan repeated.

—Won't your people accept you in exchange for our Tohonga?

"Me alone? No," repeated Glenarvan. "All of us, perhaps."

—Among the Maori, said Kai-Koumou, it's head for head.

"First offer these women in exchange for your priest," said Glenarvan, who pointed to Lady Helena and Mary Grant.

Lady Helena wanted to rush towards her husband. The major held her back.

"These two ladies," continued Glenarvan, bowing respectfully towards Lady Helena and Mary Grant, "hold a high rank in their country."

The warrior looked coldly at his prisoner. A wicked smile crossed his lips; but he suppressed it almost immediately, and replied in a voice he could barely contain:

"Do you hope to deceive Kai-Koumou with false words, you cursed European? Do you think Kai-Koumou's eyes cannot read hearts?"

And, pointing to Lady Helena:

"There's your wife!" he said.

"No! Mine!" cried Kara-Tété.

Then, pushing back the prisoners, the chief's hand extended onto Lady Helena's shoulder, who paled at the touch.

"Edward!" cried the distraught woman.

Glenarvan, without uttering a single word, raised his arm.

A gunshot rang out. Kara-Tété fell dead.

At the sound of the shot, a flood of natives poured out of the huts. The *pah* filled in an instant. A hundred arms were raised against the unfortunate souls. Glenarvan's revolver was snatched from his hand.

Kai-Koumou cast a strange glance at Glenarvan; then with one hand, covering the murderer's body, with the other, he restrained the crowd that rushed upon the children.

Finally, her voice rose above the tumult.

"Taboo! Taboo!" he cried.

At this word, the crowd stopped in front of Glenarvan and his companions, momentarily preserved by a supernatural power.

A few moments later, they were taken back to the *waré-atoua* , which served as their prison. But Robert Grant and Jacques Paganel were no longer with them.

## Chapter XII *The Funeral of a Maori Chief*

Kai-Koumou, following a fairly common practice in New Zealand, combined the title of *ariki* with that of tribal chief. He held the dignity of a priest, and, as such, he could extend the superstitious protection of taboo over people or objects.

The taboo, common to peoples of Polynesian race, has the immediate effect of prohibiting any relationship or use with the tabooed object or person.

According to Maori religion, anyone who lays a sacrilegious hand on what is declared taboo will be punished by death by the angry god. Moreover, should the deity delay avenging its own insult, the priests will not hesitate to hasten its vengeance.

The taboo is applied by chiefs for political purposes, unless it arises from an ordinary situation in private life. A native is subject to a taboo for a few days in many circumstances: when he cuts his hair, when he has just undergone a tattooing procedure, when he builds a dugout canoe, when he constructs a house, when he is afflicted with a terminal illness, when he dies. If imprudent consumption threatens to deplete rivers of fish or ruin sweet potato crops in their prime, these items are subject to a protective and economic taboo. If a chief wants to keep unwanted visitors away from his house, he imposes a taboo; if he wants to monopolize relations with a foreign ship for his own benefit, he imposes another taboo; if he is displeased with a European trader, he always imposes a taboo. His prohibition then resembles the ancient "veto" of kings.

When an object is taboo, no one can touch it with impunity. When a native is subjected to this prohibition, certain foods are forbidden to him for a specified period. If he is released from this strict diet, if he is rich, his slaves assist him and force the food he must not touch with his hands into his throat; if he is poor, he is reduced to scooping up his food with his mouth, and the taboo makes him like an animal.

In short, and to conclude, this singular custom directs and modifies the smallest actions of New Zealanders. It is the constant intervention of the divine in social life. It has the force of law, and one could say that the entire indigenous code, an indisputable and unquestioned code, is summed up in the frequent application of this taboo.

As for the prisoners locked in the *waré-atoua* , it was an arbitrary taboo that had just shielded them from the fury of the tribe. Some of the natives, friends and supporters of Kai-Koumou, had suddenly stopped at the voice of their chief and had protected the captives.

Glenarvan, however, harbored no illusions about his fate. Only his death could atone for the murder of a chief. Yet, among savage peoples, death is never more than the end of a long ordeal. Glenarvan therefore expected to pay a cruel price for the righteous indignation that had armed his hand, but he hoped that Kai-Koumou's wrath would strike only him.

What a night he and his companions endured! Who could describe their anguish and measure their suffering? Poor Robert and brave Paganel had not reappeared. But how could anyone doubt their fate? Were they not the first victims sacrificed to the natives' vengeance? All hope had vanished, even from the heart of Mac Nabbs, who did not despair easily.

John Mangles felt himself going mad at the sight of Mary Grant's bleak despair at being separated from her brother. Glenarvan thought of Lady Helena's terrible request—that she would die by his hand to escape torture or slavery! Would he have such dreadful courage?

"And Mary, what right did she have to hit her?" thought John, whose heart was breaking.

As for escape, it was obviously impossible. Ten warriors, armed to the teeth, were guarding the door of the *waré-atoua* .

The morning of February 13th arrived. No communication took place between the natives and the prisoners, who were protected by the taboo. The hut contained a certain amount of food, which the unfortunate men barely touched. Hunger vanished before the pain. The day passed without bringing either change or hope. No doubt, the hour of the dear dead man's funeral and the hour of his execution were to strike together.

However, although Glenarvan did not hide the fact that any idea of an exchange had had to abandon Kai-Koumou, the major retained a glimmer of hope on this point.

"Who knows," he said, reminding Glenarvan of the effect Kara-Tété's death had on the chief, "who knows if Kai-Koumou, deep down, doesn't feel indebted to you?"

But, despite Mac Nabbs's warnings, Glenarvan no longer wanted to hope. The next day passed without any preparations for the execution. Here was the reason for this delay.

The Maori believe that for three days after death, the soul inhabits the body of the deceased, and for three periods of twenty-four hours, the corpse remains unburied. This custom of suspending death was observed in all its rigor. Until February 15th, the *pah* remained deserted. John Mangles, hoisted onto Wilson's shoulders, frequently

observed the outer entrenchments. No native appeared there. Only the sentries, keeping a watchful eye, took turns at the gate of the *waré-atoua* .

But, on the third day, the huts opened; the savages, men, women, children, that is to say several hundred Maori, gathered in the *pah* , mute and calm.

Kai-Koumou emerged from his hut and, surrounded by the principal chiefs of his tribe, took his place on a mound a few feet high in the center of the entrenchment. The mass of natives formed a semicircle a few fathoms behind. The entire assembly remained in absolute silence.

At a sign from Kai-Koumou, a warrior headed towards the *waré-atoua* .

"Remember," Lady Helena said to her husband.

Glenarvan held his wife close to his heart. At that moment, Mary Grant approached John Mangles:

“Lord and Lady Glenarvan,” she said, “will think that if a woman can die at her husband’s hand to escape a shameful existence, a fiancée can also die at her fiancé’s hand to escape one in turn. John, I can tell you, in this supreme moment, have I not long been your fiancée in the secret of your heart? Can I count on you, dear John, as Lady Helena counted on Lord Glenarvan?”

"Mary!" cried the distraught young captain. "Ah! dear Mary!..."

He could not finish; the mat lifted up, and the captives were dragged towards Kai-Koumou; the two women were resigned to their fate; the

men concealed their anxieties under a calm that testified to a superhuman energy.

They arrived before the Zeeland chief. He did not delay his judgment:

"Did you kill Kara-Tété?" he said to Glenarvan.

"I killed him," replied the lord.

—Tomorrow, you will die at sunrise.

"Alone?" asked Glenarvan, whose heart was beating violently.

"Ah! If only the life of our Tohonga were not more precious than yours!" cried Kai-Koumou, whose eyes expressed fierce regret!

At that moment, a commotion arose among the natives. Glenarvan glanced quickly around him. Soon the crowd parted, and a warrior appeared, dripping with sweat, broken with fatigue.

Kai-Koumou, as soon as he saw him, said to him in English, with the obvious intention of being understood by the captives:

"Are you from the Pakéka camp?"

—Yes, replied the Maori.

—Did you see the prisoner, our Tohonga?

—I saw it.

—Is he alive?

"He's dead! The English shot him!"

That was the end of Glenarvan and his companions.

"All of you," cried Kai-Koumou, "will die tomorrow at daybreak!"

Thus, a common punishment struck these unfortunate people indiscriminately. Lady Helena and Mary Grant raised a look of sublime thanks to the heavens.

The captives were not returned to the *waré-atoua* .

They were to attend the chief's funeral and the bloody ceremonies that accompanied it that day. A group of natives led them a few steps to the foot of an enormous *koudi tree* .

There, their guardians remained with them, never losing sight of them. The rest of the Maori tribe, absorbed in their official grief, seemed to have forgotten them.

The three customary days had passed since Kara-Tété's death. The deceased's soul had therefore definitively left his mortal remains. The ceremony began.

The body was brought to a small mound in the middle of the entrenchment. It was dressed in sumptuous clothing and wrapped in a magnificent phormium mat. Its head, adorned with feathers, wore a crown of green leaves. Its face, arms, and chest, rubbed with oil, showed no signs of decay.

The relatives and friends arrived at the foot of the mound, and suddenly, as if some conductor had struck the beat for a funeral dirge, an immense concert of weeping, moaning, and sobbing rose into the air. They mourned the deceased to a plaintive and heavily rhythmic beat.

His relatives beat their heads; his female relatives tore their faces with their nails and showed more prodigality of blood than of tears.

These unfortunate women conscientiously performed this savage duty. But these demonstrations were not enough to appease the soul of the deceased, whose wrath would undoubtedly have struck the survivors of his tribe, and his warriors, unable to bring him back to life, wished that he should not have to regret the comforts of earthly existence in the next world. Thus, Kara Tété's wife was not to abandon her husband in the grave. Besides, the unfortunate woman would have refused to outlive him.

It was the custom, in accordance with duty, and examples of such sacrifices are not lacking in Zeelandic history.

This woman appeared. She was still young. Her disheveled hair floated over her shoulders. Her sobs and cries rose to the heavens. Vague words, regrets, broken sentences in which she praised the virtues of the dead man, punctuated her moans, and, in a supreme paroxysm of pain, she lay down at the foot of the mound, striking the ground with her head.

At that moment, Kai-Koumou approached her.

Suddenly, the unfortunate victim rose up; but a violent blow from a "méré," a kind of fearsome club whirling in the chief's hand, threw her back to the ground. She fell dead.

Terrifying cries immediately arose. A hundred arms threatened the captives, horrified by this horrible sight. But no one moved, for the funeral ceremony was not yet over.

Kara-Tété's wife had joined her husband in the grave. The two bodies lay side by side. But for the deceased, his faithful companion was not enough in the afterlife. Who would have served them both near Nouï-Atoua if their slaves had not followed them from this world to the next?

Six unfortunate men were brought before the corpses of their masters. They were servants whom the merciless laws of war had reduced to slavery. During the chief's lifetime, they had endured the harshest privations, suffered countless ill-treatment, barely fed, constantly employed in beasts of burden, and now, according to Maori belief, they would resume this life of servitude for eternity.

These unfortunate souls seemed resigned to their fate. They showed no surprise at a sacrifice long anticipated. Their hands, free of any bonds, attested that they would receive death without a fight.

Moreover, their deaths were swift, and they were spared prolonged suffering. Torture was reserved for the perpetrators of the murder, who, grouped twenty paces apart, averted their eyes from this dreadful spectacle, the horror of which was about to increase.

Six blows from the *mace* , delivered by the hands of six vigorous warriors, laid the victims on the ground, amidst a pool of blood. This signaled the start of a horrific scene of cannibalism.

The bodies of slaves are not protected by taboo like the corpse of the master. They belong to the tribe. They are the small change thrown to the mourners at funerals. Thus, once the sacrifice was over, the entire mass of natives—chiefs, warriors, elders, women, children, without distinction of age or sex—seized by a bestial fury, rushed upon the lifeless remains of the victims. In less time than a swift pen could

recount, the still-smoking bodies were torn apart, divided, dismembered, reduced not to pieces, but to shards. Of the two hundred Maori present at the sacrifice, each received his share of this human flesh. They struggled, they fought, they fought over the smallest scrap. Drops of warm blood splashed these monstrous guests, and this entire repugnant horde writhed beneath a red rain. It was the delirium and fury of tigers savagely attacking their prey. It was like a circus where beastmasters devoured wild animals. Then, twenty fires were lit at various points in the *pah* ; the smell of burning meat infected the atmosphere, and, without the dreadful tumult of this feast, without the cries that still escaped from those throats full of flesh, the captives would have heard the bones of the victims crack under the teeth of the cannibals.

Glenarvan and his companions, panting, tried to shield the two poor women from this abominable scene. They understood then what torment awaited them the next day at sunrise, and, no doubt, what cruel tortures such a death would be preceded by. They were speechless with horror.

Then the funeral dances began. Strong liquors, extracted from the "piper excelsum," a true chili pepper spirit, intensified the savages' intoxication. They were no longer human. Perhaps, forgetting the chief's taboo, they would even commit the ultimate excesses against the prisoners, terrified by their delirium? But Kai-Koumou had retained his reason amidst the general drunkenness. He allowed this bloodbath an hour to reach its full intensity, then to subside, and the final act of the funeral unfolded with the customary ceremony.

The bodies of Kara-Tété and his wife were lifted, their limbs bent and gathered against their stomachs, according to Zeelandic custom. The intention was then to bury them, not permanently, but until the earth, having devoured the flesh, contained only bones.

The location of the *oudoupa* , that is, the tomb, had been chosen outside the entrenchment, about two miles away, on the summit of a small mountain named Maunganamu, located on the right bank of the lake.

This is where the bodies were to be transported.

Two very primitive kinds of palanquins, or, to be frank, two stretchers, were brought to the foot of the mound. The corpses, folded up on themselves, more sitting than lying down, and held in their clothes by a circle of vines, were placed on them.

Four warriors lifted them onto their shoulders, and the whole tribe, resuming their funeral hymn, followed them in procession to the burial site.

The captives, still under surveillance, saw the procession leave the first enclosure of the *pah* ; then, the songs and cries gradually diminished.

For about half an hour, this mournful procession remained out of sight deep in the valley. Then, they saw it again, winding its way along the mountain paths. The distance made the undulating movement of this long, sinuous column seem fantastical.

The tribe stopped at a height of eight hundred feet, that is to say at the summit of Maunganamu, at the very place prepared for the burial of

Kara-Tété.

A simple Maori would have had for a grave only a hole and a pile of stones. But for a powerful and feared chief, undoubtedly destined for future deification, his tribe reserved a tomb worthy of his exploits.

The *oudoupa* had been surrounded by palisades, and stakes adorned with figures reddened with ochre stood near the pit where the corpses were to rest.

The parents had not forgotten that the "waidoua," the spirit of the dead, feeds on material substances, just as the body does during its perishable life. That is why food had been placed within the compound, along with the deceased's weapons and clothing.

Nothing was lacking in the comfort of the tomb. The two spouses were placed there side by side, then covered with earth and grass, after a new series of lamentations.

Then the procession silently descended the mountain, and no one could now climb Maunganamu under penalty of death, for it was taboo, like Tongariro, where the remains of a chief crushed in 1846 by a convulsion of the Zeeland soil lie.

## Chapter XIII *The Final Hours*

As the sun disappeared beyond Lake Taupo, behind the peaks of Tuhahua and Puketapu, the captives were led back to their prison. They were not to leave it again until the peaks of the Wahiti Ranges would light up with the first light of day.

They had one night left to prepare to die.

Despite the overwhelming grief, despite the horror that struck them, they ate their meal together.

"We will need all our strength," Glenarvan had said, "to look death in the face. We must show these barbarians how Europeans know how to die."

After the meal, Lady Helena recited the evening prayer aloud. All her companions, with their heads uncovered, joined in.

Where is the man who does not think of God in the face of death?

Having fulfilled their duty, the prisoners embraced.

Mary Grant and Helena, having retreated to a corner of the hut, lay down on a mat. Sleep, which suspends all suffering, soon weighed heavily upon their eyelids: they fell asleep in each other's arms, overcome by fatigue and long periods of insomnia. Glenarvan then took his friends aside and said to them:

“My dear companions, our lives and the lives of these poor women belong to God. If it is decreed by heaven that we should die tomorrow, I am sure we will die as people of courage, as Christians, ready to appear without fear before the supreme judge. God, who sees into the depths of souls, knows that we were pursuing a noble goal. If death awaits us instead of success, it is because He wills it. However harsh His sentence may be, I will not murmur against it. But death here is not merely death; it is torture, it is infamy, perhaps, and here are two women…”

Here, Glenarvan's voice, steady until then, faltered. He fell silent to control his emotion. Then, after a moment of silence:

"John," he said to the young captain, "you promised Mary what I promised Lady Helena. What have you decided?"

"This promise," replied John Mangles, "I believe I have
the right before God to fulfill it."

—Yes, John! But we are unarmed?

“Here is one,” replied John, showing a dagger. “I snatched it from Kara-Tété’s grasp when that savage fell at your feet. *My lord* , whichever of us survives the other will fulfill the wish of Lady Helena and Mary Grant.”

After these words, a profound silence reigned in the hut. Finally, the major broke the silence, saying:

"My friends, save this extreme measure for the last minute. I am not in favor of what is irreversible."

“I didn’t speak for us,” Glenarvan replied. “Whatever it may be, we will know how to brave death! Ah! If we were alone, I would have shouted to you twenty times already: ‘My friends, let’s attempt a sortie! Let’s attack these wretches!’ But them! They!…”

John, at that moment, lifted the mat and counted twenty-five natives who were keeping watch at the door of the *waré-atoua* . A large fire had been lit and cast sinister glare on the rugged terrain of the *pah* .

Some of these savages were lying around the fire; others, standing motionless, stood out sharply in black against the bright curtain of flames. But all of them frequently glanced at the hut entrusted to their care.

It is said that between a jailer who keeps watch and a prisoner who wants to escape, the odds are in the prisoner's favor. Indeed, the interest of the one is greater than the interest of the other. The latter can forget that he is guarding, the former cannot forget that he is being guarded. The captive thinks more often of escaping than his guard thinks of preventing his escape.

From there, frequent and wonderful escapes.

But here, it was hatred and vengeance that watched over the captives, not an indifferent jailer. If the prisoners had not been tied up, it was because ties were useless, since twenty-five men guarded the only exit of the *waré-atoua* .

This hut, built against the rock that marked the end of the fortification, was accessible only by a narrow strip of land that connected it in front to the *pah plateau* . Its other two sides rose above sheer slopes and overlooked a chasm a hundred feet deep. Descent from there was impossible. Nor was there any way to escape through the bottom, which was fortified by the enormous rock. The only way out was the very entrance to the *waré-atoua* , and the Maori guarded this strip of land that joined it to the *pah* like a drawbridge. Any escape was therefore impossible, and Glenarvan, after sounding the walls of his prison for the twentieth time, was forced to admit it.

The hours of that night of anguish dragged on, however. Thick darkness had enveloped the mountain. Neither moon nor stars disturbed the profound gloom. A few gusts of wind swept across the slopes of the *pah* . The stakes of the hut creaked. The natives' hearth suddenly rekindled with this passing breeze, and the reflection of the

flames cast fleeting glimmers inside the *waré-atoua* . The group of prisoners was illuminated for a moment. These poor people were lost in their final thoughts. A deathly silence reigned in the hut.

It must have been about four in the morning when the major's attention was drawn by a faint noise that seemed to be coming from behind the posts at the far end, in the wall of the hut built against the hillside. Mac Nabbs, initially indifferent to the noise, saw that it continued and listened; then, intrigued by its persistence, he pressed his ear to the ground to better assess it. It seemed to him that someone was scraping and digging outside.

When he was certain of the fact, the major, slipping near Glenarvan and John Mangles, pulled them from their painful thoughts and led them to the back of the hut.

"Listen," he said in a low voice, gesturing for them to duck down.

The scraping was becoming more and more noticeable; one could hear the small stones grinding under the pressure of a sharp object and collapsing externally.

"Something in its burrow," said John Mangles.

Glenarvan slapped his forehead:

“Who knows,” he said, “if it was a man?”

"Man or animal," replied the major, "I'll know what to expect!"

Wilson and Olbinett joined their companions, and all began to dig into the wall, John with his dagger, the others with stones torn from the

ground or with their nails, while Mulrady, lying on the ground, watched the group of natives through the half-open of the mat.

These savages, motionless around the fire, suspected nothing of what was happening twenty paces away from them.

The ground was made of loose, crumbly earth covering the siliceous tuff. So, despite the lack of tools, the hole progressed rapidly. Soon it became clear that a man or men, clinging to the sides of the *pah* , were excavating a gallery in its outer face. What could their purpose be?

Did they know about the prisoners, or did the work that seemed to be taking place simply result in a personal attempt?

The captives redoubled their efforts. Their torn fingers were bleeding, but they kept digging.

After half an hour of work, the hole they had drilled had reached a depth of half a fathom. They could tell from the louder noises that only a thin layer of earth was preventing immediate communication.

A few more minutes passed, and suddenly the major withdrew his hand, which had been cut by a sharp blade.

He held back a cry that was about to escape him.

John Mangles, opposing the blade of his dagger, avoided the knife that was waving out of the ground, but he seized the hand that held it.

It was a woman's or child's hand, a European hand!

Not a word had been spoken on either side. It was clear that both sides had an interest in remaining silent.

"Is that Robert?" Glenarvan murmured.

But, however quietly he had uttered that name, Mary Grant, awakened by the movements taking place in the hut, slipped near Glenarvan, and, seizing that hand all stained with earth, she covered it with kisses.

"You! You!" said the young girl, who could not have been mistaken, "you, my Robert!"

"Yes, little sister," replied Robert, "I am here to save you all! But, silence!"

"Brave child!" Glenarvan repeated.

"Keep an eye on the savages outside," Robert continued.

Mulrady, momentarily distracted by the appearance of the child, resumed his observation post.

"Everything is fine," he said. "There are only four warriors left keeping watch. The others are asleep."

"Courage!" replied Wilson.

In an instant, the hole was enlarged, and Robert passed from his sister's arms into Lady Helena's arms.

A long rope of phormium was wound around his body.

"My child, my child," the young woman murmured, "those savages did not kill you!"

“No, madam,” replied Robert. “I don’t know how, during the commotion, I managed to escape their sight; I crossed the enclosure; for two days, I remained hidden behind bushes; I wandered at night; I wanted to see you again. While the whole tribe was attending to the chief’s funeral, I came to reconnoiter this side of the entrenchment where the prison stands, and I saw that I could reach you. I stole this knife and rope from a deserted hut. Clumps of grass and branches of shrubs served as my ladder; I found by chance a kind of cave carved into the very rock against which this hut leans; I only had to dig a few feet into the soft earth, and here I am.”

Robert
could get .

"Let's go!" he said decisively.

—Paganel is downstairs? asked Glenarvan.

"Mr. Paganel?" replied the child, surprised by the question.

—Yes, he's waiting for us?

—But no, *my lord* . What, Mr. Paganel isn't here?

"He's not there, Robert," replied Mary Grant.

"What? You didn't see him?" Glenarvan asked. "You didn't meet in that commotion? You didn't escape together?"

"No, *my lord* ," replied Robert, dismayed to learn of the disappearance of his friend Paganel.

"Let's go," said the major, "there's not a minute to lose. Wherever Paganel is, he can't be worse off than we are here. Let's go!"

Indeed, time was precious. They had to flee. The escape presented no great difficulties, except for a section of almost perpendicular wall outside the cave, and only for about twenty feet. Then, beyond that, the slope offered a fairly gentle descent to the bottom of the mountain. From this point, the captives could quickly reach the lower valleys, while the Maori, if they were to discover their escape, would be forced to make a very long detour to reach them, since they were unaware of the existence of this tunnel dug between the *waré-atoua* and the outer slope.

The escape began. Every precaution was taken to ensure its success. The captives passed one by one through the narrow passage and found themselves in the cave. John Mangles, before leaving the hut, cleared away all the rubble and slipped through the opening himself, dropping the mats from the hut onto it. The passage was now completely concealed.

The next step was to descend the perpendicular wall to the embankment, and this descent would have been impossible if Robert had not brought the phormium rope.

It was unrolled; it was fixed to a rocky outcrop and thrown outside.

John Mangles, before letting his friends hang from these phormium filaments, which, by their twisting, formed the rope, tested them; they did not appear to offer great strength; however, it was necessary not to expose oneself recklessly, for a fall could be fatal.

"This rope," he said, "can only support the weight of two bodies; therefore, let us proceed accordingly. Let Lord and Lady Glenarvan slide down first; when they have reached the embankment, three jerks imparted to the rope will give us the signal to follow them."

"I'll go first," replied Robert. "I've discovered a sort of deep excavation at the bottom of the embankment where the first ones down can hide and wait for the others."

"Go, my child," said Glenarvan, squeezing the young boy's hand.

Robert disappeared through the cave opening. A minute later, the three jerks of the rope confirmed that the child had successfully made his descent.

Glenarvan and Lady Helena immediately ventured out of the cave. The darkness was still profound, but a few greyish hues were already tinting the peaks that rose in the east.

The biting morning chill revived the young woman. She felt stronger and began her perilous escape.

First Glenarvan, then Lady Helena, slid down the rope to where the perpendicular wall met the top of the embankment. Then Glenarvan, preceding his wife and supporting her, began to descend backwards. He searched for clumps of grass and shrubs that might offer him a foothold; he tested them first, and then placed Lady Helena's foot upon them. A few birds, suddenly awakened, flew away with small cries, and the fugitives trembled when a stone, dislodged from its socket, rolled noisily to the bottom of the mountain.

They had reached halfway up the embankment when a voice was heard at the opening of the cave:

"Stop!" whispered John Mangles.

Glenarvan, clinging with one hand to a clump of New Zealand spinach, with the other holding his wife, waited, barely breathing.

Wilson had been alerted. Having heard some noise outside the *waré-atoua* , he had gone back inside, and, lifting the mat, he was observing the Maori. At a signal from him, John stopped Glenarvan.

Indeed, one of the warriors, startled by some unusual rumor, had gotten up and approached the *waré-atoua* . Standing a few paces from the hut, he listened, his head bowed. He remained in this position for a minute that felt like an hour, his ear straining, his eye alert. Then, shaking his head like a man who had made a mistake, he returned to his companions, took an armful of dead wood, and threw it into the half-extinguished fire, whose flames rekindled. His face, brightly lit, no longer betrayed any concern, and, after observing the first glimmers of dawn that whitened the horizon, he lay down by the fire to warm his chilled limbs.

"Everything's fine," said Wilson.

John signaled to Glenarvan to resume his descent.

Glenarvan slid gently down the embankment; soon he and Lady Helena were on the narrow path where Robert was waiting for them.

The rope was shaken three times, and, in turn, John Mangles, preceding Mary Grant, followed the perilous path. His operation succeeded; he joined Lord and Lady Glenarvan in the hole indicated by Robert.

Five minutes later, all the fugitives, having happily escaped from the *waré-atoua* , left their temporary retreat, and, fleeing the inhabited shores of the lake, they plunged along narrow paths, deep into the mountains.

They walked quickly, seeking to avoid any point where a gaze might reach them. They didn't speak; they glided like shadows through the bushes. Where were they going? On an adventure, but they were free.

Around five o'clock, day began to break. Bluish hues marbled the high bands of clouds. The misty peaks emerged from the morning vapors. The sun was soon to appear, and this sun, instead of signaling the execution, would, on the contrary, signal the escape of the condemned.

Therefore, before this fatal moment, the fugitives had to have moved out of the reach of the savages, in order to detect them by distance.

But they did not walk quickly, for the paths were steep. Lady Helena climbed the slopes, supported, not to say carried, by Glenarvan, and Mary Grant leaned on the arm of John Mangles; Robert, happy, triumphant, his heart full of joy at his success, led the way, the two sailors brought up the rear.

Half an hour more, and the radiant star would emerge from the mists of the horizon.

For half an hour, the fugitives walked aimlessly. Paganel was not there to guide them—Paganel, the object of their alarms and whose absence cast a dark shadow over their happiness.

However, they headed east as far as they could, advancing towards a magnificent dawn. Soon they reached a height of five hundred feet above Lake Taupo, and the morning chill, intensified by the altitude, stung them sharply. Indistinct shapes of hills and mountains rose one above the other; but Glenarvan only wanted to lose himself in them. Later, he would figure out how to escape this mountainous labyrinth. Finally, the sun appeared, and it sent its first rays towards the fugitives.

Suddenly a terrible howl, made up of a hundred cries, burst into the air. It rose from the *pah* , whose exact location Glenarvan did not yet know.

Moreover, a thick curtain of mist, stretched beneath his feet, prevented him from distinguishing the lower valleys.

But the fugitives could not doubt it, their escape had been discovered, would they escape the pursuit of the natives? Had they been spotted?

Wouldn't their tracks betray them?

At that moment, the lower fog lifted, momentarily enveloping them in a damp cloud, and they saw three hundred feet below them the frenzied mass of natives.

They saw, but they had been seen. Many howls erupted, barks joined them, and the whole tribe, after having tried in vain to climb the rock of the *waré-atoua* , rushed out of the enclosures, and dashed along the

shortest paths in pursuit of the prisoners who were fleeing his vengeance.

## Chapter XIV *The Forbidden Mountain*

The mountaintop still rose another hundred feet or so. The fugitives had every reason to reach it in order to escape, on the opposite slope, the sight of the Maori. They hoped that some passable ridge would then allow them to reach the neighboring peaks, which merged into an orographic system whose intricacies poor Paganel would undoubtedly have unraveled, had he been there.

The ascent was therefore hastened, under the threat of these shouts which were getting closer and closer.

The invading horde was reaching the foot of the mountain.

"Courage! Courage! My friends," Glenarvan shouted, rousing his companions with voice and gesture.

In less than five minutes they reached the summit of the mountain; there they turned around to assess the situation and take a direction that could detect the Maori.

From this vantage point, their gaze overlooked Lake Taupo, which stretched westward within its picturesque mountain setting.
To the north, the peaks of Pirongia. To the south, the fiery crater of Tongariro.

But, to the east, the gaze was met with the barrier of peaks and ridges which joined the Wahiti-Ranges, that great chain whose uninterrupted

links connect the entire northern island from the Cook Strait to the eastern cape.

So we had to go back down the opposite slope and enter narrow gorges, perhaps with no way out.

Glenarvan cast an anxious glance around him; the fog having melted into the sun's rays, his gaze penetrated clearly into the smallest crevices in the ground. No movement of the Maori could escape his notice.

The natives were not five hundred feet away from it when they reached the plateau on which the solitary cone rested.

Glenarvan could not, in the slightest, prolong its stay. Exhausted or not, it had to flee or risk being surrounded.

"Let's get down!" he cried, "let's get down before the road is cut off!"

But, just as the poor women were rising with a supreme effort, Mac Nabbs stopped them and said:

"It's pointless, Glenarvan. See."

And all, indeed, saw the inexplicable change that had just occurred in the Maori movement.

Their pursuit had suddenly stopped.

The assault on the mountain had just ceased as if by an imperious counter-order. The band of natives had controlled its momentum and stopped like the waves of the sea before an impassable rock.

All these savages, ravenous for blood, now lined up at the foot of the mountain, howled, gesticulated, waved rifles and axes, but did not advance an inch. Their dogs, rooted to the ground like themselves, barked with rage.

What was happening? What invisible power was holding the natives captive? The fugitives watched without understanding, fearing that the spell that bound the Kai-Koumou tribe might break.

Suddenly, John Mangles let out a cry that made his companions turn around. With his hand, he pointed to a small fortress built on the top of the cone.

"The tomb of Chief Kara-Tété!" exclaimed Robert.

"Are you telling the truth, Robert?" asked Glenarvan.

"Yes, *my lord* , it is indeed the tomb! I recognize it…"

Robert was not mistaken. Fifty feet above, at the very tip of the mountain, freshly painted stakes formed a small palisaded enclosure. Glenarvan, in turn, recognized the tomb of the Zeeland chieftain. By chance, during his flight, he had been led to the very summit of Maunganamu.

The lord, followed by his companions, climbed the last slopes of the cone to the very foot of the tomb. A wide opening covered with mats provided access.

Glenarvan was about to enter the interior of the *oudoupa* when, all of a sudden, he stepped back sharply:

"A savage!" he said.

"A savage in this tomb?" asked the major.

—Yes, Mac Nabbs.

"Never mind, let's go in."

Glenarvan, the Major, Robert, and John Mangles entered the compound. A Maori was there, wearing a large phormium cloak; the shadow of the *oudoupa tree* obscured his features. He seemed quite calm and was eating his lunch with perfect nonchalance. Glenarvan was about to speak to him when the native, being considerate, said to him in a friendly tone and in good English:

"Please sit down, my dear lord, lunch awaits you."

It was Paganel. At his voice, everyone rushed into the *udupa* and all passed into the arms of the excellent geographer. Paganel had been found!

It was common salvation that presented itself in his person! They were going to question him, they wanted to know how and why he was at the summit of Maunganamu; but Glenarvan stopped this untimely curiosity with a word.

"The savages!" he said.

"Savages," replied Paganel, shrugging his shoulders. "Those are the kind of people I utterly despise!"

—But can't they?...

"Them! Those idiots! Come and see them!"

Everyone followed Paganel, who came out of the *oudoupa* . The Zeelanders were in the same place, surrounding the base of the cone, and shouting terrible things.

"Shout! Howl! Scream your lungs out, you stupid creatures!" said Paganel. "
I dare you to climb this mountain!"

"And why?" asked Glenarvan.

—Because the chief is buried there, because this tomb protects us, because the mountain is taboo!

-Taboo?

—Yes, my friends! And that is why I have taken refuge here, as in one of those medieval places of asylum open to the unfortunate.

"God is for us!" cried Lady Helena, raising her hands to the sky.

Indeed, the mountain was taboo, and, by its consecration, it escaped the invasion of superstitious savages.

This was not yet salvation for the fugitives, but a welcome respite, which they sought to take advantage of. Glenarvan, overcome by unspeakable emotion, did not utter a word, and the major shook his head with a truly satisfied air.

“And now, my friends,” said Paganel, “if these brutes count on us to exercise their patience, they are mistaken. In less than two days, we will be out of the reach of these scoundrels.”

"We will flee!" said Glenarvan. "But how?"

"I don't know," replied Paganel, "but we will flee nonetheless."

Then everyone wanted to hear about the geographer's adventures. Strangely enough, and remarkably reserved for such a loquacious man, it was practically necessary to drag the words from his mouth. He, who so loved to tell stories, answered his friends' questions only evasively.

"They've changed my Paganel," thought Mac Nabbs.

Indeed, the distinguished scholar's appearance was no longer the same. He wrapped himself sternly in his large phormium shawl and seemed to avoid prying eyes. His awkwardness when the subject of him arose did not escape anyone's notice, but, out of discretion, no one appeared to notice it. Moreover, when Paganel was no longer the topic of conversation, he resumed his usual cheerfulness.

As for his memories, here is what he deemed appropriate to teach his companions, when they had all sat down near him, at the foot of the posts of the *oudoupa* .

After Kara-Tété's murder, Paganel, like Robert, took advantage of the natives' commotion and threw himself out of the *pah 's enclosure* . But, less fortunate than young Grant, he went and made his way to a Maori encampment. There ruled a tall chief, intelligent-looking, clearly superior to all the warriors of his tribe. This chief spoke fluent English and welcomed the geographer by gently nudging his nose.

Paganel wondered whether he should consider himself a prisoner or not. But, seeing that he could not take a step without being graciously accompanied by the chief, he soon knew where he stood in that regard.

This chief, named "Hihy," meaning "ray of the sun," was not a bad man. The geographer's glasses and spyglass seemed to give him a high opinion of Paganel, and he particularly attached him to his person, not only through his kindness, but also with good phormium ropes. Especially at night.

This new situation lasted for three full days.

During this time, was Paganel treated well or badly? "Yes and no," he said, without elaborating. In short, he was a prisoner, and, apart from the prospect of immediate torture, his situation seemed to him hardly more enviable than that of his unfortunate friends.

Fortunately, during one night he managed to gnaw through his ropes and escape. He had witnessed the chief's funeral from afar; he knew he had been buried on the summit of Maunganamu, and that the mountain had become taboo as a result. It was there that he resolved to take refuge, unwilling to leave the land where his companions were being held. He succeeded in his perilous undertaking. He arrived last night at Kara-Tété's tomb and waited, "while regaining his strength," for heaven to deliver his friends by some chance.

Such was Paganel's account. Did he deliberately omit certain details of his time among the natives? More than once, his embarrassment led people to believe so. In any case, he received unanimous congratulations, and, the past known, they returned to the present. The situation remained extremely serious. The natives, if they did not dare to climb Maunganamu, were counting on hunger and thirst to recapture their prisoners. It was a matter of time, and savages have long patience.

Glenarvan was not mistaken about the difficulties of his position, but he resolved to wait for favorable circumstances, and to create them, if necessary.

First, Glenarvan wanted to carefully reconnoiter Maunganamu, that is, his makeshift fortress, not to defend it—for a siege was not a threat—but to escape. He, the major, John, Robert, Paganel, and he took an exact survey of the mountain. They observed the direction of the paths, their ends, and their gradient. The mile-long ridge that connected Maunganamu to the Wahiti Ranges sloped downwards towards the plain. Its narrow, capriciously shaped crest presented the only passable route, should escape be possible. If the fugitives could pass undetected under cover of night, perhaps they would manage to slip into the deep valleys of the Ranges and flush out the Maori warriors. But this route presented more than one danger. In its lower section, it passed within rifle range. The bullets of the natives posted on the lower ramps could cross there, and stretch out a network of iron that no one could cross with impunity.

Glenarvan and his friends, having ventured onto the dangerous part of the ridge, were greeted by a hail of lead that did not reach them. A few flakes, carried by the wind, reached them. They were made of printed paper, which Paganel picked up out of pure curiosity and deciphered with some difficulty.

"Well!" he said, "do you know, my friends, what those animals use to stuff their guns?"

"No, Paganel," replied Glenarvan.

—With pages from the Bible! If that's how they use sacred verses, I pity their missionaries! They'll have a hard time establishing Maori libraries.

"And what passage from the holy books did these natives shoot right at our chest?" asked Glenarvan.

"A word from Almighty God," replied John Mangles, who had just read the paper stained by the explosion. "This word tells us to hope in Him," added the captain, with the unwavering conviction of his Scottish faith.

“Read, John,” said Glenarvan.

And John read this verse, respected by the blast of gunpowder:

“Psalm 90. —“ *Because he has hoped in me, I will deliver him* .”

“My friends,” said Glenarvan, “we must convey these words of hope to our brave and dear companions. They will surely revive their hearts.”

Glenarvan and his companions climbed the steep paths of the cone, and headed towards the tomb they wanted to examine.

Along the way, they were surprised to notice, at short intervals, a kind of trembling in the ground. It wasn't a commotion, but rather the continuous vibration experienced by the walls of a boiler under the pressure of boiling water. Violent vapors, generated by the action of subterranean fires, were evidently stored beneath the mountain's mantle.

This peculiarity could not amaze people who had just passed between the hot springs of Waikato. They knew that this central region of Ika-Na-Maoui is essentially volcanic.

It is a veritable sieve whose fabric allows vapors from the earth to transpire through boiling springs and solfataras.

Paganel, who had already observed it, therefore drew his friends' attention to the volcanic nature of the mountain. Maunganamu was just one of the many cones that dot the central part of the island, that is to say, a volcano of the future.

The slightest mechanical action could cause the formation of a crater in its walls made of a whitish, siliceous tuff.

“Indeed,” said Glenarvan, “but we are no more in danger here than near the boiler of the *Duncan* . This crust of earth is solid metal!”

"Okay," replied the major, "but a boiler, however good it may be, always ends up bursting after a long service."

"Mac Nabbs," Paganel continued, "I have no intention of staying on this cone. Let the heavens show me a passable route, and I will leave it at once."

“Ah! Why can’t this Maunganamu carry us himself,” replied John Mangles, “since so much mechanical power is contained within his flanks! Perhaps beneath our feet lies the strength of several million horses, sterile and wasted! Our *Duncan* wouldn’t ask for a thousandth part of it to carry us to the ends of the earth!”

This memory of the *Duncan* , evoked by John Mangles, had the effect of bringing back the saddest thoughts to Glenarvan's mind; for, desperate as his own situation was, he often forgot it to lament the fate of his crew.

He was still thinking when he found his unfortunate companions at the summit of Maunganamu.

Lady Helena, as soon as she saw him, came to him.

"My dear Edward," she said, "have you recognized our position? Should we hope or fear?"

"Hope, my dear Helena," replied Glenarvan. "The natives will never cross the mountain boundary, and we will have plenty of time to devise an escape plan."

“Besides, madam,” said John Mangles, “it is God himself who advises us to hope.”

John Mangles gave Lady Helena this page from the Bible, on which the sacred verse was written. The young woman and the girl, their souls trusting, their hearts open to all divine intervention, saw in these words of the holy book an infallible omen of salvation.

"Now, to the *oudoupa* !" cried Paganel gaily. "This is our fortress, our castle, our dining room, our study! No one will disturb us here! Ladies, allow me to show you around this charming dwelling."

We followed the amiable Paganel. When the savages saw the fugitives desecrating this taboo grave once more, they unleashed numerous shots and terrifying howls, the latter as loud as the former. But, fortunately, the bullets did not travel as far as the cries, and fell halfway down the ribs, while the shouts faded into the distance.

Lady Helena, Mary Grant and their companions, completely reassured to see that the superstition of the Maori was even stronger than their

anger, entered the funerary monument.

It was a palisade of red-painted stakes, this *oudupa* of the Zeeland chief. Symbolic figures, a veritable tattoo on wood, recounted the nobility and great deeds of the deceased. Strings of amulets, shells, or carved stones swung from one post to another. Inside, the ground disappeared beneath a carpet of green leaves. In the center, a slight protrusion betrayed the freshly dug grave.

There lay the chief's weapons, his loaded and primed rifles, his spear, his superb green jade axe, with a sufficient supply of powder and bullets for the eternal hunts.

"That's quite an arsenal," said Paganel, "which we'll put to better use than the deceased. What a good idea those savages have, taking their weapons to the other world!"

—Hey! But, those are English-made rifles! said the major.

“No doubt,” replied Glenarvan, “and it’s a rather foolish custom to give firearms as gifts to savages! They then use them against invaders, and rightly so. In any case, these rifles could prove useful to us!”

"But what will be even more useful to us," said Paganel, "are the provisions and water destined for Kara-Tété."

Indeed, the deceased's family and friends had done things properly. The provisions testified to their esteem for the chief's virtues. There was enough food to feed ten people for fifteen days, or rather, the deceased for eternity. These plant-based foods consisted of ferns, sweet potatoes (the native "Convolvulus batatas"), and potatoes, long since imported into the country by Europeans. Large vessels held the pure

water that features in a Zeeland meal, and a dozen artfully woven baskets contained tablets of a completely unknown green gum.

The fugitives were thus protected from hunger and thirst for a few days. They needed no encouragement to take their first meal at the chief's expense.

Glenarvan brought back the necessary food for his companions, and entrusted them to the care of Mr. Olbinett.

The *steward* , ever the stickler for formalities, even in the most serious situations, found the meal menu rather meager. Besides, he didn't know how to prepare the roots, and he lacked a fire.

But Paganel got him out of trouble by advising him to simply bury his ferns and sweet potatoes in the ground itself.

Indeed, the temperature of the upper layers was very high, and a thermometer inserted into the soil would certainly have registered a temperature of sixty to sixty-five degrees. Olbinett nearly suffered a serious scalding, for just as he had dug a hole to plant his roots, a column of steam rose and hissed to a height of a fathom. The *steward* fell backward in terror.

"Turn off the tap!" shouted the major, who, aided by the two sailors, rushed over and filled the hole with pumice debris, while Paganel, observing this phenomenon with a peculiar air, murmured these words:

"Hey! Hey! Hey! Why not?"

"You're not hurt?" Mac Nabbs asked Olbinett.

"No, Mr. Mac Nabbs," replied the *steward* , "but I hardly expected…"

"So many blessings from heaven!" exclaimed Paganel joyfully. "After the water and provisions of Kara-Tété, the fire of the earth! This mountain is paradise! I propose we found a colony here, cultivate it, and settle here for the rest of our days! We will be the Robinsons of Maunganamu! Truly, I search in vain for what we lack on this comfortable cone!"

"Nothing, if it's solid," replied John Mangles.

"Good! It wasn't made yesterday," said Paganel. "It has long withstood the effects of the internal fires, and it will hold up well until our departure."

"Lunch is served," announced Mr. Olbinett, as gravely as if he were performing his duties at Malcolm's castle.

The fugitives immediately sat down near the palisade and began one of those meals that providence had been sending them so precisely in the most serious circumstances for some time now.

They weren't fussy about the food, but opinions were divided regarding the edible fern root. Some found it sweet and pleasant, others had a mucilaginous, completely tasteless flavor and a remarkable toughness. The sweet potatoes, cooked in the hot ground, were excellent. The geographer observed that Kara-Tété had nothing to complain about.

Then, his hunger satisfied, Glenarvan proposed to discuss an escape plan without delay.

"Already!" said Paganel, in a truly pitiful tone. "What, you're already thinking of leaving this place of delights?"

"But, Mr. Paganel," replied Lady Helena, "assuming we are in Capua, you know that we must not imitate Hannibal!"

—Madam, replied Paganel, I will not presume to contradict you, and since you wish to discuss, let us discuss.

“First of all,” said Glenarvan, “I think we must attempt an escape before famine forces us to. We have plenty of strength, and we must take advantage of it. Tonight, we will try to reach the eastern valleys by crossing the natives’ encirclement under cover of darkness.”

"Perfect," replied Paganel, "if the Maoris let us through."

"And if they stop us?" said John Mangles.

"Then we will use drastic measures," replied Paganel.

"So you have great resources?" asked the major.

"I don't know what to do with it!" replied Paganel without explaining further.

All that remained was to wait for nightfall to try and cross the line of natives.

They had not left the place. Their ranks even seemed to have swelled with the latecomers from the tribe.

Here and there, burning hearths formed a belt of fires at the base of the cone. When darkness invaded the surrounding valleys,

Maunganamu seemed to emerge from a vast blaze, while its summit was lost in a thick shadow.

Six hundred feet below, we could hear the commotion, the shouts, the murmur of the enemy bivouac.

At nine o'clock, on a very dark night, Glenarvan and John Mangles decided to conduct a reconnaissance before leading their companions onto this perilous route. They descended silently for about ten minutes and made their way along the narrow ridge that crossed the native line, fifty feet above the encampment.

Everything had been fine until then. The Maori, lying near their fires, did not seem to notice the two fugitives, who took a few more steps.

But suddenly, to the left and right of the ridge, a double gunfight broke out.

"Back!" said Glenarvan, "those bandits have cat eyes and riflemen's rifles!"

John Mangles and he immediately climbed the steep slopes of the mountain, and quickly came to reassure their friends who were frightened by the detonations.

Glenarvan's hat had been pierced by two bullets. It was therefore impossible to venture onto the endless ridge between these two ranks of riflemen.

"Until tomorrow," said Paganel, "and since we cannot deceive the vigilance of these natives, you will allow me to serve them a dish of my own making!"

The temperature was quite cold. Fortunately, Kara-Tété had taken his best nightgowns to his grave, warm phormium blankets which everyone wrapped themselves in without scruple, and soon the fugitives, guarded by native superstition, were sleeping peacefully under the palisades, on this warm ground all shivering with inner stirrings.

## Chapter XV *Paganel's Grand Means*

The next day, February 17th, the rising sun awakened the sleepers of Maunganamu with its first rays. The Maori had long been coming and going at the foot of the cone, without straying from their line of sight. Furious shouts greeted the appearance of the Europeans as they emerged from the desecrated enclosure.

Each cast their first glance at the surrounding mountains, at the deep valleys still shrouded in mist, at the surface of Lake Taupo, which the morning wind was rippling slightly.

Then everyone, eager to know Paganel's new plans, gathered around him and questioned him with their eyes.

Paganel immediately responded to the worried curiosity of his companions.

"My friends," he said, "the great thing about my project is that, even if it doesn't produce the effect I expect, even if it fails, our situation won't be worse. But it must succeed, and it will succeed."

"And this project?" asked Mac Nabbs.

"Here it is," replied Paganel. "The superstition of the natives has made this mountain a place of refuge; superstition must help us to get out of it."

If I manage to persuade Kai-Koumou that we have been victims of our desecration, that heavenly wrath has struck us, in short, that we are dead and a terrible death, do you think he will abandon this Maunganamu plateau to return to his village?

"That's beyond doubt," said Glenarvan.

"And what horrible death do you threaten us with?" asked Lady Helena.

"From the death of sacrilege, my friends," replied Paganel. "The avenging flames are beneath our feet. Let us open their path!"

"What! You want to make a volcano!" exclaimed John Mangles.

—Yes, a fake volcano, an improvised volcano, whose fury we will control! There is a whole supply of subterranean vapors and fires just waiting to erupt! Let's organize an artificial eruption for our benefit!

"That's a good idea," said the major. "Well thought out, Paganel!"

"You understand," the geographer continued, "that we will pretend to be devoured by the flames of the Zeelandic Pluto, and that we will disappear spiritually into the tomb of Kara-Tété…"

—Where we will stay three days, four days, five days, if necessary, that is to say until the moment when the savages, convinced of our death, give up the fight.

"But if they get the idea of seeing our punishment," said Miss Grant, "if they climb the mountain?"

“No, my dear Mary,” replied Paganel, “they will not. The mountain is taboo, and when it has devoured its desecrators, its taboo will be even more rigorous!”

“This plan is truly well-conceived,” said Glenarvan. “It has only one obstacle, and that is that the savages will stubbornly remain at the foot of Maunganamu for so long that our supplies will run out. But that is unlikely, especially if we play our cards right.”

"And when will we try this last chance?" asked Lady Helena.

"This very evening," replied Paganel, "at the hour of the thickest darkness."

“It’s agreed,” replied Mac Nabbs. “Paganel, you’re a man of genius, and I, who am usually not very enthusiastic, guarantee success. Ah! Those scoundrels! We’re going to perform a little miracle for them, which will delay their conversion by a good century! May the missionaries forgive us!”

Paganel's project was thus adopted, and truly, with the superstitious beliefs of the Maori, it could, it had to succeed. Its execution remained. The idea was sound, but its implementation difficult. Wouldn't this volcano devour the audacious souls who dared to dig a crater for it? Could one control, direct this eruption, once its vapors, flames, and lava were unleashed? Wouldn't the entire cone plunge into a fiery abyss?

This was to touch upon those phenomena over which nature has reserved its absolute monopoly.

Paganel had foreseen these difficulties, but he intended to act cautiously and without pushing things to extremes. An appearance was enough to deceive the Maori, not the terrible reality of an eruption.

How long that day seemed! Everyone counted the endless hours. Everything was prepared for the escape. The provisions from the *oudoupa* had been divided and formed unobtrusive packages.

A few mats and firearms completed this light baggage, taken from the chief's tomb. It goes without saying that these preparations were made within the palisaded enclosure and without the knowledge of the natives.

At six o'clock, the *steward* served a comforting meal. Where and when they would eat in the valleys of the district, no one could predict.

So, they dined for the future. The middle course consisted of half a dozen large rats, caught by Wilson and steamed. Lady Helena and Mary Grant stubbornly refused to taste this game, so highly prized in New Zealand, but the men devoured it like true Maori. The meat was truly excellent, even delicious, and all six rodents were gnawed to the bone.

Evening twilight arrived. The sun disappeared behind a band of thick, stormy-looking clouds.

A few flashes of lightning illuminated the horizon, and distant thunder rolled in the depths of the sky.

Paganel welcomed the storm, which seemed to aid his plans and complete his elaborate staging. The savages are superstitiously affected by these great phenomena of nature. New Zealanders consider thunder to be the angry voice of their Nouï-Atoua, and lightning merely the wrathful flash of her eyes. The deity would thus appear to have personally come to punish those who violated the taboo. At eight o'clock, the summit of Maunganamu disappeared into a sinister darkness.

The sky provided a black backdrop to the burst of flames that Paganel's hand was about to unleash.

The Maori could no longer see their prisoners.

The time to act had come.

They had to act quickly. Glenarvan, Paganel, Mac Nabbs, Robert, the *steward* , and the two sailors, all set to work simultaneously.

The crater's location was chosen thirty paces from the tomb of Kara-Tete. It was important, in fact, that this *sacred site* be spared by the eruption, for with it would also have disappeared the taboo surrounding the mountain. There, Paganel had noticed an enormous block of stone around which vapors were emanating with considerable intensity. This block covered a small natural crater carved into the cone, and its weight alone prevented the outpouring of subterranean flames. If it were dislodged from its hollow, vapors and lava would immediately burst forth from the newly exposed opening.

The workers fashioned levers from the piles torn from inside the *oudoupa* , and they vigorously attacked the rock mass. Under their

combined efforts, the rock soon began to move. They carved a sort of small trench into the mountainside so that it could slide down this inclined plane. As they lifted it, the tremors in the ground became more pronounced.

Muffled roars of flames and hissing of furnaces ran beneath the thinning crust. The audacious workers, veritable cyclopes wielding the fires of the earth, labored silently.

Soon, a few cracks and jets of scalding steam told them that the place was becoming perilous. But a supreme effort tore the block away, and it slid down the mountainside and disappeared.

The thinned layer gave way immediately. An incandescent column shot skyward with vehement detonations, while streams of boiling water and lava rolled towards the natives' camp and the lower valleys.

The entire cone trembled, and it seemed as if it were plunging into a bottomless abyss. Glenarvan and his companions barely had time to escape the eruption's onslaught; they fled into the enclosure of the *oudoupa* , not without having received a few drops of water heated to a temperature of ninety-four degrees.

This water initially gave off a slight smell of broth, which soon changed into a very strong smell of sulfur.

Then, the mud, the lava, the volcanic debris, all mingled in a single blaze. Torrents of fire swept down the flanks of Maunganamu. The nearby mountains lit up in the eruption's fire; the deep valleys glowed with intense reflection.

All the savages had risen, howling under the sting of the lava that boiled in the middle of their camp. Those whom the river of fire had not reached fled and climbed the surrounding hills; then, they turned back in terror and beheld this frightening phenomenon, this volcano in which the wrath of their god engulfed the desecrators of the sacred mountain. And, at certain moments when the roar of the eruption subsided, they could be heard howling their sacramental cry:

"Taboo! Taboo! Taboo!"

However, an enormous quantity of vapors, burning rocks, and lava erupted from the Maunganamu crater. It was no longer a mere geyser like those near Mount Hecla in Iceland, but Mount Hecla itself. All this volcanic suppuration had been contained until then beneath the cone's envelope, because the Tongariro vents were sufficient for its expansion; but when a new outlet was opened, it rushed forth with extreme vehemence, and that night, by a law of equilibrium, the other eruptions on the island must have lost their usual intensity.

An hour after this volcano first appeared on the world stage, wide streams of incandescent lava flowed down its flanks. A whole legion of rats could be seen emerging from their uninhabitable burrows and fleeing the burning ground.

Throughout the night, under the raging storm overhead, the cone erupted with a violence that greatly worried Glenarvan. The eruption was eating away at the crater's rim.

The prisoners, hidden behind the fence of stakes, followed the terrifying progress of the phenomenon.

Morning arrived. The volcanic fury showed no signs of abating. Thick yellowish vapors mingled with the flames; torrents of lava snaked in all directions.

Glenarvan, his eye alert, his heart pounding, slid his gaze to every crevice of the palisaded enclosure and observed the natives' encampment.

The Maori had fled to the nearby plateaus, beyond the reach of the volcano. A few corpses, lying at the foot of the cone, were charred by the fire. Further on, towards the *pah* , the lava had reached about twenty huts, which were still smoking. The New Zealanders, forming groups here and there, gazed at the plumed summit of Maunganamu with reverent dread.

Kai-Koumou came amidst his warriors, and Glenarvan recognized him. The chief advanced to the foot of the cone, along the side of the lava that was respected, but he did not cross the first step.

There, with arms outstretched like a sorcerer performing an exorcism, he made a few grimaces whose meaning was not lost on the prisoners. As Paganel had foreseen, Kai-Koumou was imposing a stricter taboo on the vengeful mountain.

Soon afterwards, the natives left in lines along the winding paths that led down towards the *pah* .

"They're leaving!" cried Glenarvan. "They're abandoning their post! Thank God! Our stratagem has succeeded! My dear Helena, my brave companions, we are dead, we are buried! But tonight, at nightfall, we

will rise again, we will leave our tomb, we will flee these barbaric tribes!"

It would be difficult to imagine the joy that reigned in the *Oudoupa* . Hope had returned to every heart. These courageous travelers forgot the past, forgot the future, thinking only of the present!

And yet, it wasn't easy to reach some
European settlement in the middle of these unknown lands. But,
with Kai-Koumou tracked down, we thought we were saved from all the savages of
New Zealand!

The major, for his part, did not hide the supreme contempt he felt for these Maoris, and he did not lack expressions to describe them.

It was an assault between Paganel and him. They called them unforgivable brutes, stupid donkeys, Pacific idiots, Bedlam savages, Antipodean cretins, etc., etc.

They didn't run out of things to say.

A whole day still had to pass before the final escape. He was employed in discussing a plan of escape. Paganel had carefully preserved his map of New Zealand, and he was able to search for the safest routes on it.

After discussion, the fugitives decided to head east, towards the Bay of Plenty. This meant passing through unknown, but likely deserted, regions. The travelers, already accustomed to overcoming natural difficulties and circumventing physical obstacles, feared only encountering the Maori. They therefore wanted to avoid them at all

costs and reach the eastern coast, where missionaries had established a few settlements.

Moreover, this part of the island had hitherto escaped the disasters of war, and the native parties were not campaigning there.

As for the distance between Lake Taupo and the Bay of Plenty, it could be estimated at one hundred miles.

Ten days' march at ten miles a day. It would be accomplished, not without fatigue; but in this courageous group, no one counted their steps. Once they reached the missions, the travelers would rest there, awaiting some favorable opportunity to reach Auckland, for it was always that city they wanted to reach.

Having established these various points, they continued to watch for the natives until evening. Not a single one remained at the foot of the mountain, and when shadows fell over the Taupo valleys, no fire signaled the presence of the Maori at the base of the cone. The way was clear.

At nine o'clock, in the pitch black of night, Glenarvan gave the signal to depart. He and his companions, armed and equipped at Kara-Tété's expense, began cautiously descending the slopes of Maunganamu. John Mangles and Wilson kept their heads, ears, and eyes alert. They stopped at the slightest sound, scrutinizing every glimmer of light. Each of them, as it were, slid down the mountainside to blend in with it.

Two hundred feet above the summit, John Mangles and his sailor reached the perilous ridge so stubbornly defended by the natives. If, by some misfortune, the Maori, more cunning than the fugitives, had feigned a retreat to lure them in, if they hadn't been fooled by the volcanic phenomenon, it was right there that their presence would be revealed. Glenarvan, despite all his confidence and despite Paganel's jokes, couldn't help but shudder. The salvation of his people would depend entirely on those ten minutes it would take to cross the ridge. He could feel Lady Helena's heart beating, clinging to his arm.

He wasn't even thinking of retreating. Nor was John. The young captain, followed by everyone and protected by complete darkness, crawled along the narrow ridge, stopping when some loose stone rolled to the bottom of the plateau. If the savages were still lying in ambush below, these unusual noises would surely provoke a fierce exchange of fire on both sides.

However, gliding like a snake along this sloping ridge, the fugitives were not making fast progress. When John Mangles reached the lowest point, he was barely twenty-five feet from the plateau where the natives had camped the day before; then the ridge rose again with a fairly steep slope and climbed towards a thicket for a quarter of a mile.

However, this lower section was crossed without incident, and the travelers began their ascent in silence. The clump of trees was invisible, but they knew it was there, and provided no ambush was prepared, Glenarvan hoped to find safety there. However, he observed that from this point onward, he was no longer protected by the taboo. The rising ridge did not belong to the Maunganamu, but rather to the orographic system that bristled on the eastern side of Lake Taupo. Therefore, not only gunfire from the natives, but a hand-to-hand attack was to be feared.

For ten minutes, the small group rose imperceptibly towards the upper plateaus.

John could not yet see the dark thicket, but he must have been less than two hundred feet away.

Suddenly he stopped, almost stepped back. He thought he had heard some noise in the shadows. His hesitation slowed his companions' progress.

He remained motionless, enough to worry those who followed him. They waited. What anguish! Would they be forced to turn back and return to the summit of Maunganamu?

But John, seeing that the noise did not resume, continued his ascent along the narrow path of the ridge.

Soon the thicket vaguely appeared in the shadows.

In a few steps, he was reached, and the fugitives huddled under the thick foliage of the trees.

## Chapter XVI *Between Two Fires*

Nightfall favored this escape. They had to take advantage of it to leave the ominous surroundings of Lake Taupo. Paganel took the lead of the small group, and his remarkable traveler's instinct was revealed once again during this difficult trek through the mountains. He maneuvered with surprising skill in the darkness, choosing without hesitation the almost invisible paths, maintaining a constant course from which he never deviated. His night vision, it is true, served him well, and his cat-like eyes allowed him to distinguish the smallest objects in the profound darkness.

For three hours, we walked without stopping on the very long ramps of the eastern slope.

Paganel veered slightly southeast to reach a narrow passage carved between the Kaimanawa and Wahiti Ranges, where the road from Auckland to Haukes Bay winds its way. Once through this gorge, he planned to leave the road and, sheltered by the high ranges, march to the coast through the uninhabited regions of the province.

By nine o'clock in the morning, twelve miles had been covered in twelve hours. Nothing more could be expected of the courageous

women. Besides, the location seemed suitable for establishing a camp. The fugitives had reached the defile separating the two mountain ranges. The Oberland road remained to the right and ran south. Paganel, map in hand, made a detour to the northeast, and at ten o'clock, the small group reached a kind of steep redan formed by a spur of the mountain. The provisions were taken from the bags and enjoyed. Mary Grant and the major, who had been little satisfied with the edible bracken until then, feasted on it that day.

The stop lasted until two o'clock in the afternoon, then the eastern route was resumed, and the travelers stopped for the evening eight miles from the mountains. They readily agreed to sleep in the open air.

The next day, the road presented some rather serious difficulties. It was necessary to cross this curious district of volcanic lakes, geysers and solfataras which extends to the east of the Wahiti-Ranges.

The eyes were much more satisfied than the legs. Every quarter mile there were detours, obstacles, and switchbacks, very tiring indeed; but what a strange spectacle, and what infinite variety nature gives to its grand scenes!

Over this vast expanse of twenty square miles, the outpouring of subterranean forces manifested itself in every form. Salt springs of strange transparency, teeming with myriad insects, emerged from the native thickets of tea trees. They gave off a penetrating odor of burnt gunpowder and deposited on the ground a residue as white as dazzling snow. Their limpid waters were brought to a boil, while other nearby springs flowed forth in icy sheets. Gigantic ferns grew on their banks, under conditions similar to those of Silurian vegetation.

From all sides, sprays of liquid, swirling with vapors, leapt from the ground like fountains in a park, some continuous, others intermittent, as if subject to the whims of a capricious Pluto. They cascaded in an amphitheater on superimposed natural terraces, like modern basins; their waters gradually mingled beneath the swirls of white steam, and, eroding the semi-transparent steps of these gigantic staircases, they fed entire lakes with their bubbling waterfalls. Further on, the hot springs and tumultuous geysers gave way to solfataras. The terrain appeared covered with large pustules. These were so many half-extinct craters, cracked with numerous fissures from which various gases escaped. The atmosphere was saturated with the pungent and unpleasant odor of sulfurous acids. Sulfur, forming crusts and crystalline concretions, covered the ground. There, for centuries, incalculable and sterile riches had accumulated, and it is in this still little-known district of New Zealand that industry will come to obtain supplies, if the sulfur mines of Sicily ever run out.

One can imagine the hardships endured by the travelers crossing these obstacle-strewn regions. Campsites were difficult to establish, and the hunters' rifles found not a single bird worthy of being plucked by Mr. Olbinett's hands. Consequently, they often had to make do with ferns and sweet potatoes, a meager meal that did little to restore the exhausted strength of the small group. Each of them was therefore eager to be done with these arid and desolate lands.

However, it took no less than four days to circumnavigate this impassable region. Only on February 23rd, fifty miles from Maunganamu, was Glenarvan able to camp at the foot of an unnamed

mountain, marked on Paganel's map. Plains of shrubs stretched out before him, and the great forests reappeared on the horizon.

This was a good omen, provided, however, that the habitability of these regions did not attract too many inhabitants. So far, the travelers had not encountered a single native.

That day, Mac Nabbs and Robert killed three kiwis, which were honorably placed on the camp table, but not for long, to tell the truth, for in a few minutes they were devoured from beak to feet.

Then, at dessert, between the sweet potatoes and the potatoes, Paganel made a motion which was adopted with enthusiasm.

He proposed to name this unnamed mountain, which disappeared three thousand feet into the clouds, Glenarvan, and he carefully marked the name of the Scottish lord on his map.

It is pointless to dwell on the rather monotonous and uninteresting incidents that marked the rest of the journey. Only two or three events of any importance distinguished this crossing from the lakes to the Pacific Ocean.

They walked all day through forests and plains. John kept his bearings by the sun and stars. The sky, quite merciful, spared them its heat and rain. Nevertheless, growing fatigue delayed these travelers, already so cruelly tested, and they longed to reach the missions. They talked, however, they still conversed, but no longer in a general way. The small group divided into smaller groups formed not by closer friendship, but by a more personal sharing of ideas.

Most often, Glenarvan sailed alone, thinking, as he approached the coast, of the *Duncan* and its crew. He forgot the dangers that still threatened him all the way to Auckland, to think of his massacred sailors. That horrible image never left him.

Harry Grant was no longer being discussed. What was the point, since nothing could be done for him? If the captain's name was still mentioned, it was in conversations between his daughter and John Mangles.

John had not reminded Mary of what the young girl had told him during the last night of the *Waré-atoua* . His discretion prevented him from acknowledging words spoken in a supreme moment of despair.

When John spoke of Harry Grant, he was still planning further research. He assured Mary that Lord Glenarvan would resume this aborted endeavor. He proceeded from this premise that the document's authenticity could not be doubted. Therefore, Harry Grant did exist somewhere.

So, even if they had to search the whole world, they would find him. Mary was intoxicated by these words, and she and John, united by the same thoughts, now shared the same hope. Lady Helena often joined in their conversation; but she did not indulge in such illusions, and yet she was careful not to bring these young people back to the sad reality.

Meanwhile, Mac Nabbs, Robert, Wilson, and Mulrady hunted close to the small group, each contributing their share of game. Paganel, still draped in his phormium cloak, stood apart, silent and pensive.

And yet, — this is worth saying — despite this law of nature which causes even the best characters to become bruised and embittered in the midst of trials, dangers, fatigues, and privations, all these companions in misfortune remained united, devoted, and ready to die for one another.

On February 25th, the road was blocked by a river which was to be the Waikari on Paganel's map.

It was possible to ford it.

For two days, the plains of shrubs stretched on without interruption. Half the distance between Lake Taupo and the coast had been covered without any unpleasant encounters, if not without fatigue.

Then appeared immense and endless forests reminiscent of the Australian forests; but here, kauri trees replaced eucalyptus. Although they had considerably worn down their sense of wonder during their four-month journey, Glenarvan and his companions were still amazed at the sight of these gigantic pines, worthy rivals of the cedars of Lebanon and the "mammoth trees" of California. These kauri trees, in botanical terms "Damarine Abietaceae," measured one hundred feet in height before the branches began to fork. They grew in isolated clumps, and the forest consisted not of individual trees, but of countless groups of trees that spread their umbrella of green leaves two hundred feet into the air.

Some of these pines, still young, barely a hundred years old, resembled the red firs of European regions. They bore a dark crown ending in a sharp cone. Their elders, on the other hand, trees five or six centuries old, formed immense tents of greenery supported by the

intricate forks of their branches. These patriarchs of the Zeeland forest measured up to fifty feet in circumference, and the combined arms of all the travelers could not encircle their trunks.

For three days, the small group ventured beneath these vast arches and onto clay soil that no man had ever trod. This was evident from the piles of resinous gum heaped in many places at the foot of the kauri trees, which would have sufficed for many years for the local export market.

The hunters found the kiwis, so rare in the Maori-inhabited lands, in large flocks. It was in these inaccessible forests that these curious birds, hunted by the Zeeland hounds, had taken refuge. They provided the travelers with abundant and wholesome food.

Paganel even caught sight of a pair of gigantic birds in the distance, hidden in a thicket. His naturalist's instincts were awakened. He called his companions, and, despite their fatigue, he, the major, and Robert set off in pursuit of the animals.

The geographer's keen curiosity is understandable, for he had recognized, or thought he recognized, these birds as "moas," belonging to the "dinormis" species, which several scholars classify among the extinct varieties. This encounter confirmed the opinion of Mr. De Hochstetter and other travelers regarding the current existence of these wingless giants of New Zealand.

These *moas* that Paganel was pursuing, contemporaries of the megatherium and pterodactyls, must have been eighteen feet tall. They were enormous and cowardly ostriches, for they fled with extreme speed. But not a single bullet could stop them in their tracks! After a

few minutes of hunting, these elusive *moas* vanished behind the tall trees, and the hunters were left with nothing but their powder and travel expenses.

That evening, March 1st, Glenarvan and his companions, finally abandoning the immense kauri forest, camped at the foot of Mount Ikirangi, whose summit rose to five thousand five hundred feet in the air.

So, nearly a hundred miles had been covered since Maunganamu, and the coast was still thirty miles away. John Mangles had hoped to make the crossing in ten days, but he was unaware at the time of the difficulties that this region presented.

Indeed, the detours, the obstacles on the road, the imperfections of the bearings, had lengthened it by a fifth, and unfortunately the travelers, upon arriving at Mount Ikirangi, were completely exhausted.

However, it still took two long days of walking to reach the coast, and now, a new activity, extreme vigilance, became necessary again, because they were entering a region often frequented by natives.

However, each one overcame their fatigue, and the next day the small group set off again at daybreak.

Between Mount Ikirangi, which was left to the right, and Mount Hardy, whose summit rose to a height of 3,700 feet to the left, the journey became very arduous. For ten miles, there was a plain bristling with "supplejacks," a kind of flexible vine aptly named "suffocating vines." At every step, arms and legs became entangled in them, and these vines, like veritable serpents, coiled around the body with their

tortuous twists. For two days, it was necessary to advance, axe in hand, and struggle against this hydra with a hundred thousand heads, these troublesome and tenacious plants, which Paganel would readily have classified among the zoophytes.

There, on those plains, hunting became impossible, and the hunters no longer brought their usual tribute. Provisions were running out and could not be replenished; water was scarce, and a thirst intensified by fatigue could not be quenched.

Then the sufferings of Glenarvan and his people were horrible, and, for the first time, their moral energy was close to abandoning them.

Finally, no longer walking, dragging themselves along, soulless bodies led by the sole instinct of self-preservation which survived all other feelings, they reached Lottin Point, on the shores of the Pacific.

In this place, a few deserted huts could be seen, ruins of a village recently devastated by war, abandoned fields, everywhere the marks of looting and fire. There, fate had a new and terrible ordeal in store for the unfortunate travelers.

They were wandering along the shore when, a mile from the coast, a detachment of natives appeared and rushed towards them, waving their weapons. Glenarvan, cornered by the sea, could not flee, and, gathering his last strength, was about to prepare for battle, when John Mangles cried out:

"A canoe, a canoe!"

Twenty paces away, a dugout canoe, equipped with six oars, lay beached on the shore. Launching it, rushing aboard, and fleeing that

dangerous shore was a matter of moments. John Mangles, Mac Nabbs, Wilson, and Mulrady took up the oars; Glenarvan took the rudder; the two women, Olbinett and Robert, lay down beside him.

In ten minutes, the canoe was a quarter of a mile offshore. The sea was calm. The fugitives remained in profound silence.

However, John, not wanting to stray too far from the shore, was about to give the order to extend the shoreline, when his oar suddenly stopped in his hands.

He had just spotted three canoes emerging from Lottin Point, with the obvious intention of supporting his pursuit.

"To sea! To sea!" he cried, "and let us be swallowed by the waves!"

The dugout canoe, rowed by its four paddlers, set off again. For half an hour, it managed to maintain its distance; but the unfortunate men, exhausted, soon began to weaken, and the three other canoes gained a considerable advantage. At that moment, they were barely two miles apart. Therefore, there was no possibility of avoiding the attack of the natives, who, armed with their long rifles, were preparing to fire.

What was Glenarvan doing then? Standing at the stern of the canoe, he was searching the horizon for some elusive help. What was he waiting for? What did he want? Did he have some kind of premonition?

Suddenly, his gaze blazed, his hand stretched out towards a point in space.

"A ship!" he cried, "my friends, a ship!"

Swim! Swim hard!

Not one of the four rowers turned around to see this unexpected building, for they couldn't afford to waste a single stroke. Only Paganel, rising to his feet, focused his spyglass on the indicated point.

"Yes," he said, "a ship! A steamer! It's steaming away! It's coming towards us! Courage, my comrades!"

The fugitives rallied with renewed energy, and for another half hour, maintaining their distance, they hauled the canoe away with rapid, forceful strokes. The steamer was becoming increasingly visible. Its two masts, now bare, and the thick swirls of its black smoke were clearly visible.

Glenarvan, leaving the helm to Robert, had seized the geographer's telescope and did not miss one of the ship's movements.

But what must John Mangles and his companions have thought when they saw the lord's features contract, his face pale, and the instrument fall from his hands? A single word explained this sudden despair to them.

"The *Duncan!* " cried Glenarvan, "the *Duncan* and the convicts!"

"The *Duncan!* " cried John, who dropped his oar and stood up immediately.

"Yes! Death on both sides!" murmured Glenarvan, broken by so much anguish.

It was the yacht, indeed, there was no mistaking it, the yacht with its crew of bandits!

The major couldn't stop himself from cursing the heavens. That was the last straw!

However, the canoe was left to its own devices.

Where to direct her? Where to flee? Was it possible to choose between the savages or the convicts?

A gunshot came from the nearest native boat, and the bullet struck Wilson's oar. A few strokes of the oars then pushed the canoe back towards the *Duncan* .

The yacht was steaming at full speed and was now only half a mile away. John Mangles, cut off on all sides, no longer knew how to move, which way to flee. The two poor women, kneeling, distraught, were praying.

The natives were firing a hail of bullets, raining down around the canoe. At that moment, a loud bang rang out, and a cannonball from the yacht's gun swung over the heads of the fugitives. Caught in the crossfire, they lay motionless between the *Duncan* and the native canoes.

John Mangles, mad with despair, grabbed his axe. He was about to scuttle the canoe, to sink it with his unfortunate companions, when a cry from Robert stopped him.

"Tom Austin! Tom Austin!" the child said. "He's on board! I see him! He recognized us! He's waving his hat!"

The axe remained hanging from John's arm.

A second cannonball whistled over his head and cut the closest of the three canoes in two, while a hurrah erupted aboard the *Duncan* . The savages, terrified, fled and made for the shore.

"To us! To us, Tom!" John Mangles had shouted in a booming voice.

And, a few moments later, the ten fugitives, without knowing how, without understanding anything, were all safe aboard the *Duncan* .

## Chapter XVII *Why the "Duncan" sailed along the east coast of New Zealand*

It is impossible to describe the feelings of Glenarvan and his friends when the songs of old Scotland resounded in their ears. The moment they stepped onto the deck of the *Duncan* , the *bagpiper* , puffing out his bagpipes, struck up the national *pibroch* of Malcolm's clan, and vigorous hurrahs greeted the laird's return to the ship.

Glenarvan, John Mangles, Paganel, Robert, the major himself, all were crying and embracing.

At first there was joy, delirium. The geographer was absolutely mad; he frolicked and aimed his inseparable spyglass at the last canoes returning to the coast.

But at the sight of Glenarvan and his companions, their clothes in tatters, their faces gaunt, and bearing the marks of terrible suffering, the yacht's crew ceased their displays. These were specters returning on board, not the bold and brilliant travelers whom, three months earlier, hope had led them in the wake of the shipwrecked. Chance,

chance alone, brought them back to this ship they no longer expected to see! And in what a pitiful state of decay and weakness!

But, before thinking about fatigue, the pressing needs of hunger and thirst, Glenarvan questioned Tom Austin about his presence in these parts.

Why was the
*Duncan on the east coast of* New Zealand? How was it not in Ben Joyce's hands
? By what providential fate had God brought it
onto the fugitives' route?

Why? How? What's the point? Thus began the simultaneous barrage of questions that struck Tom Austin point-blank. The old sailor didn't know who to listen to. So he decided to listen only to Lord Glenarvan and answer only him.

"But the convicts?" asked Glenarvan, "what did you do with the convicts?"

"The convicts?" replied Tom Austin in the tone of a man who doesn't understand a question.

—Yes! The wretches who attacked the yacht?

"What yacht?" said Tom Austin, "Your Honor's yacht?"

—But yes! Tom! The *Duncan* , and that Ben Joyce who came aboard?

"I don't know this Ben Joyce, I've never seen him," replied
Austin.

"Never!" exclaimed Glenarvan, astonished by the old sailor's replies. "Then, you might ask, Tom, why is the *Duncan* cruising off the coast of New Zealand right now?"

If Glenarvan, Lady Helena, Miss Grant, Paganel, the Major, Robert, John Mangles, Olbinett, Mulrady, Wilson, understood nothing of the old sailor's astonishment, what was their astonishment when Tom replied in a calm voice:

"But the *Duncan* crosses here by order of your honor."

"By my orders!" cried Glenarvan.

—Yes, *my lord* . I have only complied with your instructions contained in your letter of January 14th.

"My letter! My letter!" cried Glenarvan.

At that moment, the ten travelers surrounded Tom Austin, their eyes devouring him. So the letter dated from Snowy River had reached *Duncan?*

"Now then," Glenarvan continued, "let's talk this through, because I think I'm dreaming.
You received a letter, Tom?"

—Yes, a letter from Your Honor.

—In Melbourne?

—In Melbourne, just as I was finishing repairing my damage.

—And this letter?

—It was not written in your hand, but signed by you, *my lord* .

—That's exactly it. My letter was brought to you by a convict named Ben Joyce.

—No, by a sailor named Ayrton, quartermaster of the *Britannia* .

—Yes! Ayrton, Ben Joyce, it's the same person. Well! What did this letter say?

She ordered me to leave Melbourne without delay and to come and cruise along the eastern coasts of…

"From Australia!" exclaimed Glenarvan with a vehemence that disconcerted the old sailor.

"From Australia?" repeated Tom, opening his eyes. "No! From New Zealand!"

"From Australia! Tom! From Australia!" replied Glenarvan's companions in unison.

At that moment, Austin experienced a kind of dazzling vision.

Glenarvan spoke to him with such assurance that he feared he had misread the letter. He, the faithful and punctual sailor, could he have made such a mistake? He blushed, he became flustered.

"Get well soon, Tom," said Lady Helena, "Providence has willed..."

"But no, madam, forgive me," replied old Tom. "No! It's not possible! I wasn't mistaken! Ayrton read the letter just like me, and it was he, he, who wanted, on the contrary, to take me back to the Australian coast!"

"Ayrton?" Glenarvan exclaimed.

—Himself! He maintained to me that it was a mistake for you to arrange to meet me at Twofold Bay!

"Do you have the letter, Tom?" asked the major, intrigued to the highest degree.

“Yes, Mr. Mac Nabbs,” replied Austin. “I’ll go and get it.”

Austin ran to his cabin on the forecastle.

During the minute of his absence, we looked at each other, we were silent, except for the major, who, his eye fixed on Paganel, said, crossing his arms:

"For example, you have to admit, Paganel, that would be a bit much!"

"Huh?" said the geographer, who, with his back bent and glasses on his forehead, resembled a gigantic question mark.

Austin returned. He was holding in his hand the letter written by Paganel and signed by Glenarvan.

"May your honor read," said the old sailor.

Glenarvan took the letter and read:

"Orders to Tom Austin to put to sea without delay and steer the *Duncan* at 37 degrees latitude to the east coast of New Zealand!..."

"New Zealand!" cried Paganel, leaping up.

And he took the letter from Glenarvan's hands, rubbed his eyes, adjusted his glasses on his nose, and read it in turn.

"New Zealand!" he said with an accent impossible to reproduce, as the letter slipped from his fingers.

At that moment, he felt a hand on his shoulder. He straightened up and found himself face to face with the major.

"Come now, my good Paganel," said Mac Nabbs gravely, "it's fortunate you didn't send the *Duncan* to Cochinchina!"

This joke finished off the poor geographer. A universal, Homeric laugh swept through the entire yacht crew. Paganel, like a madman, paced back and forth, clutching his head in his hands, tearing at his hair. He no longer knew what he was doing; what he wanted to do, even less! He descended the ladder to the quarterdeck, mechanically; he paced the deck, staggering, going forward aimlessly, and climbed back up onto the forecastle. There, his feet became entangled in a tangle of cables. He stumbled. His hands, at random, caught on a rope.

Suddenly, a terrible explosion rang out. The forecastle gun fired, riddling the tranquil waters with a volley of grapeshot. The unfortunate Paganel had grabbed onto the still-loaded gun's rope, and the hammer had just struck the fulminating primer. Hence the thunderous crash. The geographer was thrown over the forecastle ladder and disappeared through the hatch into the crew's quarters.

The shock of the explosion was followed by a cry of terror. A tragedy was feared. Ten sailors rushed into the hold and pulled Paganel, doubled over, from the deck.

The geographer had stopped speaking.

The long body was carried onto the quarterdeck. The brave Frenchman's companions were in despair. The major, always a doctor in important situations, was preparing to remove the unfortunate Paganel's clothes in order to dress his wounds; but no sooner had he laid his hand on the dying man than he sat up, as if he had been brought into contact with an electric coil.

"Never! Never!" he cried; and, pulling the tattered pieces of his clothes back over his thin body, he buttoned himself up with singular vivacity.

"But, Paganel!" said the major.

—No! I tell you!

—We must visit…

—You will not be visiting!

"You may have broken it..." Mac Nabbs continued.

"Yes," replied Paganel, who stood upright on his long legs, "but what I broke, the carpenter will mend!"

—What then?

"The post's stanchion, which broke when I fell!"

At this reply, the bursts of laughter began again with even greater fervor. This response had reassured all the friends of the worthy

Paganel, who had emerged safe and sound from his adventures with the forecastle's cannon.

"In any case," thought the major, "here's a strangely prudish geographer!"

However, Paganel, having recovered from his great emotions, still had to answer a question he could not avoid.

"Now, Paganel," Glenarvan told him, "answer frankly. I admit that your distraction was providential. Surely, without you, the *Duncan* would have fallen into the hands of the convicts; without you, we would have been recaptured by the Maori! But, for God's sake, tell me by what strange association of ideas, by what supernatural aberration of mind, you were led to write the name of New Zealand for the name of Australia?"

"Oh! Good heavens!" cried Paganel, "it's…"

But at that very moment, his eyes fell upon Robert, upon Mary Grant, and he stopped short; then he replied:

“What do you want, my dear Glenarvan, I am a madman, a lunatic, an incorrigible being, and I will die in the guise of the most famous absent-minded person…”

"Unless we skin you alive," added the major.

"Flay me alive!" cried the geographer furiously. "Is that an allusion?"

"What allusion, Paganel?" asked Mac Nabbs in his quiet voice.

The incident had no further consequences. The mystery of the *Duncan 's presence* was solved; the miraculously saved travelers thought only of returning to their comfortable cabins on board and having lunch.

However, after allowing Lady Helena and Mary Grant, the Major, Paganel, and Robert to enter the quarterdeck, Glenarvan and John Mangles kept Tom Austin close to them. They still wanted to question him.

"Now, old Tom," said Glenarvan, "answer me. Didn't that order to go cruising off the coast of New Zealand seem strange to you?"

“Yes, Your Honor,” replied Austin, “I was very surprised, but I am not in the habit of questioning the orders I receive, and I obeyed. Could I have acted otherwise? If, because I did not follow your instructions to the letter, a catastrophe had occurred, would I not have been guilty? Would you have acted differently, Captain?”

"No, Tom," replied John Mangles.

"But what did you think?" asked Glenarvan.

“I thought, Your Honor, that in Harry Grant’s best interest, we should go where you told me to go. I thought that, due to some new circumstances, a ship would be taking you to New Zealand, and that I should be waiting for you on the east coast of the island. Moreover, when I left Melbourne, I kept my destination a secret, and the crew only learned of it when we were at sea, when the lands of Australia had already disappeared from sight. But then an incident occurred on board that left me quite perplexed.”

"What do you mean, Tom?" asked Glenarvan.

“I mean,” replied Tom Austin, “when Quartermaster Ayrton learned, the day after the ship set sail, the destination of the *Duncan* …”

"Ayrton!" exclaimed Glenarvan. "So he's on board?"

—Yes, Your Honor.

"Ayrton here!" repeated Glenarvan, looking at John Mangles.

"God willed it!" replied the young captain.

In an instant, with the speed of lightning, Ayrton's conduct, his long-planned betrayal, Glenarvan's wounding, Mulrady's murder, the miseries of the expedition halted in the Snowy marshes—the entire past of the wretch appeared before the eyes of these two men. And now, by the strangest turn of events, the convict was in their hands.

"Where is he?" Glenarvan asked sharply.

"In a cabin on the forecastle," replied Tom Austin, "and kept under guard."

—Why this imprisonment?

"Because when Ayrton saw that the yacht was sailing for New Zealand, he flew into a rage, because he tried to force me to change the ship's course, because he threatened me, because finally he incited my men to mutiny. I realized he was a dangerous individual, and I had to take precautionary measures against him."

—And since then?

—Since that time, he has remained in his cabin, without trying to leave it.

"Okay, Tom."

At that moment, Glenarvan and John Mangles were summoned to the quarterdeck. Lunch, which they so urgently needed, was prepared. They took their places at the mess table and did not speak of Ayrton.

But, once the meal was over, and the guests, refreshed and restored, were gathered on deck, Glenarvan informed them of the quartermaster's presence on board. At the same time, he announced his intention to summon him before them.

"May I be excused from attending this interrogation?" asked Lady Helena. "I confess, my dear Edward, that the sight of this unfortunate man would be extremely distressing to me."

"This is a confrontation, Helena," replied Lord Glenarvan. "Please stay. Ben Joyce must come face to face with all his victims!"

Lady Helena went to this observation. She and Mary Grant took their places beside Lord Glenarvan. Around him sat the Major, Paganel, John Mangles, Robert, Wilson, Mulrady, and Olbinett, all so gravely implicated by the convict's treachery. The yacht's crew, not yet grasping the gravity of the scene, remained in profound silence.

"Bring in Ayrton," said Glenarvan.

## Chapter XVIII *Ayrton or Ben Joyce*

Ayrton appeared. He crossed the bridge with a confident stride and climbed the quarterdeck stairs. His eyes were dark, his teeth clenched, his fists tightly closed. His person betrayed neither boastfulness nor humility. When he stood before Lord Glenarvan, he folded his arms, silent and calm, awaiting questioning.

"Ayrton," said Glenarvan, "so here we are, you and us, on this *Duncan* that you wanted to deliver to Ben Joyce's convicts!"

At these words, the quartermaster's lips trembled slightly. A quick flush colored his impassive features. Not the flush of remorse, but the shame of failure. On this yacht he claimed to command as master, he was a prisoner, and his fate would be decided there in a few moments.

However, he did not reply. Glenarvan waited patiently. But
Ayrton stubbornly remained completely silent.

"Speak, Ayrton, what do you have to say?" Glenarvan resumed.

Ayrton hesitated; the lines on his forehead deepened; then, in a calm voice:

"I have nothing to say, *my lord* ," he replied. "I made the mistake of letting myself be taken in. Do as you please."

Having given his answer, the quartermaster turned his gaze toward the coastline stretching to the west, feigning profound indifference to everything happening around him. To look at him, one would have thought him a stranger to this serious matter. But Glenarvan had resolved to remain patient. A powerful interest compelled him to learn certain details of Ayrton's mysterious existence, especially concerning Harry Grant and the *Britannia* . He therefore resumed his questioning,

speaking with extreme gentleness, and imposing complete calm upon the violent stirrings in his heart.

"I think, Ayrton," he continued, "that you will not refuse to answer certain questions I wish to ask you. And first of all, should I call you Ayrton or Ben Joyce? Are you, yes or no, the quartermaster of the *Britannia* ?"

Ayrton remained impassive, observing the coast, deaf to all questions.

Glenarvan, whose eye was becoming animated, continued to question the quartermaster.

"Would you like to tell me how you left the *Britannia* , why you were in Australia?"

Same silence, same impassivity.

"Listen to me carefully, Ayrton," Glenarvan continued. "You'd better talk. You may be held to a degree of candor, which is your last resort. For the last time, will you answer my questions?"

Ayrton turned his head towards Glenarvan and looked him in the eyes:

" *My lord* ," he said, "I have no right to answer. It is up to the justice system, not me, to prove myself."

"The proof will be easy!" replied Glenarvan.

“Easy, *my lord* ?” Ayrton replied mockingly. “Your honor seems to be overstepping its bounds. I maintain that the best judge in *Temple Bar* would be embarrassed by me! Who can say why I came to Australia,

since Captain Grant is no longer here to find out? Who can prove that I am this Ben Joyce the police reported, since the police never held me and my companions are free? Who, except you, can cite against me not a crime, but a reprehensible act? Who can assert that I intended to seize this ship and deliver it to the convicts? No one, hear me, no one! You have suspicions, fine, but you need certainty to convict a man, and you lack that certainty. Until proven otherwise, I am Ayrton, quartermaster of the *Britannia* ."

Ayrton had become animated while speaking, and soon returned to his initial indifference. He doubtless imagined that his statement would end the interrogation; but Glenarvan spoke again and said:

"Ayrton, I am not a judge tasked with investigating you. That is not my concern. It is important that our respective situations be clearly defined. I am not asking you for anything that could compromise you. That is a matter for the courts. But you know what investigations I am pursuing, and with a word you can put me back on the trail I have lost. Will you speak?"

Ayrton shook his head like a man determined to remain silent.

"Will you tell me where Captain Grant is?" asked Glenarvan.

"No, *my lord* ," replied Ayrton.

—Will you tell me where the *Britannia ran aground* ?

—No more.

“Ayrton,” Glenarvan replied, almost pleadingly, “if you know where Harry Grant is, will you at least tell his poor children, who are just

waiting for you to say a word?”

Ayrton hesitated. His features tightened. But in a low voice:

"I cannot, *my lord* ," he murmured.

And he added violently, as if he were reproaching himself for a moment of weakness:

"No! I won't talk! Hang me if you want!"

"Hang him!" cried Glenarvan, overcome by a sudden surge of anger.

Then, regaining his composure, he replied in a deep voice:

"Ayrton, there are neither judges nor executioners here. At the first release you will be handed over to the English authorities."

"That's what I'm asking!" replied the quartermaster.

Then he calmly returned to the cabin that served as his prison, and two sailors were stationed at his door, ordered to watch his every move. The witnesses to this scene withdrew, indignant and despairing.

Since Glenarvan had just failed against Ayrton's obstinacy, what was left for him to do?

Obviously, to continue the project formed in Eden to return to Europe, even if it meant taking up this unsuccessful undertaking again later, because then the traces of the *Britannia* seemed to be irrevocably lost, the document did not lend itself to any new interpretation, every other country was missing even on the route of the thirty-seventh parallel, and the *Duncan* had no choice but to return.

Glenarvan, after consulting his friends, discussed the return voyage more specifically with John Mangles. John inspected his bunkers; the coal supply would last no more than fifteen days. Therefore, it was necessary to refuel at the next port of call.

John suggested to Glenarvan that they set sail for Talcahuano Bay, where the *Duncan* had already taken on supplies before embarking on its circumnavigation. It was a direct route, precisely along the thirty-seventh parallel. Then the yacht, well-stocked, would head south, round Cape Horn, and return to Scotland via the Atlantic routes.

This plan was adopted, and the engineer was ordered to increase the pressure. Half an hour later, the course was set for Talcahuano across a sea worthy of its name, the Pacific, and at six o'clock in the evening, the last mountains of New Zealand disappeared into the warm mists of the horizon.

And so the return journey began.

A sad journey for these courageous researchers who returned to port without bringing back Harry Grant!

So the crew, so joyful at the start, so confident at first, now defeated and discouraged, resumed their journey to Europe. Not one of these brave sailors felt moved at the thought of seeing their country again, and all of them would have braved the perils of the sea for a long time to come to find Captain Grant.

Thus, the cheers that greeted Glenarvan upon his return were soon followed by discouragement. No more of the constant communication between passengers, no more of the conversations that once enlivened

the journey. Everyone kept to themselves, in the solitude of their cabin, and rarely did anyone appear on the deck of the *Duncan* .

The man in whom the ship's feelings, whether painful or joyful, were usually exaggerated, Paganel, he who, if need be, would have invented hope, Paganel remained gloomy and silent. He was barely seen.

His natural loquacity and French vivacity had turned to muteness and dejection. He seemed even more utterly discouraged than his companions. While Glenarvan spoke of resuming his search, Paganel shook his head like a man who had lost all hope, and whose mind seemed firmly set on the fate of the *Britannia 's survivors* .

You could tell he believed they were irrevocably lost.

However, there was one man on board who could have the final word on this catastrophe, and whose silence persisted. It was Ayrton. No doubt this wretch knew, if not the truth about the captain's current situation, at least the location of the shipwreck. But obviously, if Grant were found, he would be a witness against him. So he remained stubbornly silent. Hence the violent anger, especially among the sailors, who wanted to do him harm.

Several times, Glenarvan renewed his attempts near the quartermaster. Promises and threats were useless. Ayrton's obstinacy was so extreme, and so inexplicable, that the major began to believe he knew nothing. An opinion shared, moreover, by the geographer, and which corroborated his own particular ideas about Harry Grant.

But if Ayrton knew nothing, why didn't he admit his ignorance? It couldn't be used against him. His silence only made it harder to devise a

new plan. Should they deduce Harry Grant's presence on the Australian continent from the quartermaster's encounter? They had to get Ayrton to explain himself on this matter at all costs.

Lady Helena, seeing her husband's failure, asked his permission to try her hand against the quartermaster's obstinacy. Where a man had failed, perhaps a woman would succeed through her gentle influence. Is this not the eternal story of that hurricane in the fable that cannot tear the cloak from the traveler's shoulders, while the slightest ray of sunshine immediately snatches it away?

Glenarvan, knowing his young wife's intelligence, gave her complete freedom to act.

On that day, March 5th, Ayrton was brought to Lady Helena's apartment. Mary Grant had to attend the interview, as the young woman's influence could be considerable, and Lady Helena did not want to overlook any chance of success.

For an hour, the two women remained locked in with the quartermaster of the *Britannia* , but nothing leaked from their conversation. What they said, the arguments they used to extract the convict's secret, all the details of this interrogation remained unknown. Moreover, when they left Ayrton, they did not appear to have succeeded, and their faces betrayed genuine discouragement.

So, when the quartermaster was escorted back to his cabin, the sailors greeted him with violent threats. He simply shrugged, which only increased the crew's fury, and nothing less than the intervention of John Mangles and Glenarvan was needed to contain it.

But Lady Helena did not consider herself defeated. She wanted to fight to the end against this pitiless soul, and the next day she herself went to Ayrton's cabin, in order to avoid the scenes caused by her passing on the deck of the yacht.

For two long hours, the kind and gentle Scottish woman remained alone, face to face, with the leader of the convicts. Glenarvan, in the grip of nervous agitation, prowled near the cabin, sometimes determined to exhaust every chance of success, sometimes to tear his wife away from this painful conversation.

But this time, when Lady Helena reappeared, her features radiated confidence. Had she then extracted this secret and stirred the last fibers of pity in the heart of this wretch?

Mac Nabbs, who first saw it, could not suppress a very natural movement of disbelief.

Yet the word spread at once among the crew that the quartermaster had finally yielded to Lady Helena's entreaties. It was like an electric shock. All the sailors gathered on deck, and more quickly than if Tom Austin's whistle had summoned them to action.

However, Glenarvan had rushed to meet his wife.

"Did he speak?" he asked.

"No," replied Lady Helena. "But, yielding to my entreaties, Ayrton wishes to see you."

—Ah! Dear Helena, you have succeeded!

—I hope so, Edward.

—Have you made any promise that I must ratify?

—Only one, my friend, is that you will use all your influence to soften the fate reserved for this unfortunate man.

"Very well, my dear Helena. Let Ayrton come at once."

Lady Helena retired to her room, accompanied by Mary Grant, and the quartermaster was led to the mess, where Lord Glenarvan was waiting for him.

## Chapter XIX *A Transaction*

As soon as the quartermaster was in the presence of the lord, his guards withdrew.

"You wished to speak with me, Ayrton?" said Glenarvan.

"Yes, *my lord* ," replied the quartermaster.

—Just me?

—Yes, but I think it would be better if Major Mac Nabbs and Mr. Paganel attended the interview.

—For whom?

-In my opinion."

Ayrton spoke calmly. Glenarvan stared at him; then he sent word to Mac Nabbs and Paganel, who immediately accepted his invitation.

"We are listening to you," said Glenarvan, as soon as his two friends had taken their places at the table in the mess.

Ayrton paused for a few moments and said:

" *My lord* , it is customary for witnesses to be present at any contract or transaction between two parties. That is why I requested the presence of Messrs. Paganel and Mac Nabbs. For this is, strictly speaking, a matter I have come to propose to you."

Glenarvan, used to Ayrton's ways, did not flinch, although a matter between this man and himself seemed a strange thing.

"What is this all about?" he said.

"Here it is," replied Ayrton. "You wish to know certain details from me that may be useful to you. I wish to obtain certain advantages from you that will be valuable to me. Tit for tat, *my lord* . Does that suit you or not?"

"What are these details?" asked Paganel.

"No," Glenarvan replied, "what are these advantages?"

Ayrton, with a nod of his head, showed that he understood the nuance observed by Glenarvan.

"Here," he said, "are the benefits I demand. Do you still intend, *my lord* , to hand me over to the English authorities?"

—Yes, Ayrton, and it's only fair.

“I’m not saying no,” the quartermaster replied calmly. “
So, you wouldn’t agree to grant me my freedom?”

Glenarvan hesitated before answering such a pointed question. Perhaps the fate of Harry Grant depended on what he said!

However, his sense of duty to justice prevailed, and he said:

"No, Ayrton, I cannot give you back your freedom."

"I'm not asking for it," the quartermaster replied proudly.

—So, what do you want?

—A middle ground, *my lord* , between the gallows that await me and the freedom you cannot grant me.

—And it is?…

—To abandon myself on one of the deserted islands of the Pacific, with the basic necessities.

I'll get out of this as best I can, and I'll repent, if I have the time!

Glenarvan, unprepared for this opening, looked at his two friends, who remained silent. After thinking for a few moments, he replied:

"Ayrton, if I grant your request, will you teach me everything I need to know?"

—Yes, *my lord* , that is to say, everything I know about Captain Grant and the *Britannia* .

—The whole truth?

—Whole.

—But who will answer me?...

—Oh! I see what worries you, *my lord* . You will have to rely on me, on the word of a criminal! That's true! But what do you want?

That's the situation. It's a take-it-or-leave-it situation.

"I will trust you, Ayrton," Glenarvan said simply.

—And you will be right, *my lord* . Besides, if I deceive you, you will always have the means to take revenge!

-Which?

"By coming to get me on the island I couldn't escape from."

Ayrton had an answer for everything. He anticipated difficulties, providing irrefutable arguments against them. Clearly, he affected to be handling his "case" with unquestionable good faith. It was impossible to surrender oneself with more perfect trust. And yet, he found a way to go even further down this path of selflessness.

“ *My lord* and gentlemen,” he added, “I want you to be convinced of this fact: I am playing my cards on the table. I am not trying to deceive you, and I will give you further proof of my sincerity in this matter. I am acting frankly because I myself am counting on your loyalty.”

"Speak, Ayrton," replied Glenarvan.

— *My lord* , I do not yet have your word to accept my proposal, and yet I do not hesitate to tell you that I know little about Harry Grant.

"Nothing much!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

“Yes, *my lord* , the details I am able to give you relate to me; they are personal to me, and will hardly help you to pick up the trail you have lost.”

A look of deep disappointment crossed the faces of Glenarvan and the major. They had believed the quartermaster possessed an important secret, and he admitted that his revelations would be largely fruitless. As for Paganel, he remained impassive.

In any case, this confession by Ayrton, which he gave, so to speak, without guarantee, particularly moved his listeners, especially when the quartermaster added in conclusion:

"So, you are warned, *my lord* ; the matter will be less advantageous for you than for me."

"It doesn't matter," replied Glenarvan. "I accept your proposal, Ayrton. You have my word that I will be landed on one of the islands in the Pacific Ocean."

"Very well, *my lord* ," replied the quartermaster.

Was this strange man happy with this decision?

One might have doubted it, for his impassive face revealed no emotion. It seemed as if he were negotiating for someone else rather than himself.

"I am ready to answer," he said.

"We have no questions for you," said Glenarvan. "Tell us what you know, Ayrton, starting by stating who you are."

“Gentlemen,” replied Ayrton, “I am indeed Tom Ayrton, the quartermaster of the *Britannia* . I left Glasgow on Harry Grant’s ship on March 12, 1861. For fourteen months, we sailed the Pacific Ocean together, seeking some advantageous position to establish a Scottish colony. Harry Grant was a man capable of great things, but serious arguments often arose between us. His temperament did not suit me. I am not good at bending; and with Harry Grant, once his mind is made up, all resistance is impossible, *my lord* . That man is made of iron, both for himself and for others. Nevertheless, I dared to mutiny. I tried to draw the crew into my revolt and seize the ship. Whether I was right or wrong is of little consequence.” In any case, Harry Grant did not hesitate, and on April 8, 1862, he landed me on the west coast of Australia.

"From Australia," said the major, interrupting Ayrton's story, "and therefore you left the *Britannia* before its stopover at Callao, whence are its last reports dated?"

“Yes,” replied the quartermaster, “because the *Britannia* never called at Callao while I was on board. And the reason I mentioned Callao to you at Paddy O’Moore’s farm is that your story had just revealed this detail to me.”

"Go on, Ayrton," said Glenarvan.

—So I found myself abandoned on a nearly deserted coast, but only twenty miles from the penal institutions at Perth, the capital of Western Australia. Wandering along the shore, I met a band of convicts who had just escaped. I joined them. You will spare me, *my lord* , the recounting of my life for the past two and a half years. Suffice it to say that I

became the leader of the escapees under the name of Ben Joyce. In September 1864, I presented myself at the Irish farm. I was taken in as a servant under my real name, Ayrton. I waited there for an opportunity to seize a ship. That was my ultimate goal. Two months later, the *Duncan* arrived. During your visit to the farm, you told me, *my lord* , the whole story of Captain Grant. I then learned what I hadn't known: the *Britannia* 's stopover at Callao, the last news of it dated June 1862, two months after my landing, the matter of the document, the ship's loss at a point on the thirty-seventh parallel, and finally, your serious reasons for searching for Harry Grant across the Australian continent. I didn't hesitate. I resolved to take possession of the *Duncan* , a magnificent ship that would have outpaced the best speedboats in the British navy. But it had serious damage to repair. So I let it sail for Melbourne and offered myself to you in my true capacity as quartermaster, proposing to guide you to the site of a shipwreck I had fictitiously placed off the east coast of Australia. And so, sometimes followed at a distance and sometimes preceded by my band of convicts, I led your expedition across the province of Victoria. My men committed a pointless crime at Camden Bridge, since the *Duncan* , once it reached the coast, could not escape me, and with that yacht, I was master of the ocean. I thus led you, unsuspectingly, as far as the Snowy River. The horses and oxen gradually succumbed to gastrolobium poisoning. I bogged the wagon down in the Snowy marshes. At my insistence… But you know the rest, *my lord* , and you can be certain that, were it not for Mr. Paganel's distraction, I would now be in command aboard the *Duncan* . Such is my story, gentlemen; my revelations, unfortunately, cannot put you back on Harry Grant's trail, and you see that in dealing with me you have made a bad deal.

The quartermaster fell silent, crossed his arms as was his custom, and waited. Glenarvan and his friends remained silent. They sensed that the whole truth had just been revealed by this strange criminal. The capture of the *Duncan* had failed only due to a cause beyond his control. His accomplices had come to the shores of Twofold Bay, as evidenced by the convict's tunic found by Glenarvan. There, loyal to their cause and finally, weary of waiting for him, they had undoubtedly returned to their trade of plundering and arson in the countryside of New South Wales. The major was the first to resume the interrogation, in order to clarify the dates relating to the *Britannia* .

"So," he asked the quartermaster, "it was indeed on April 8, 1862, that you were landed on the west coast of Australia?"

"Exactly," replied Ayrton.

—And do you know what Harry Grant's plans were?

—In a vague way.

"Keep talking, Ayrton," said Glenarvan. "The slightest clue could put us on the right track."

“Here is what I can tell you, *my lord* ,” replied the quartermaster. “Captain Grant intended to visit New Zealand. However, this part of his program was not carried out during my time on board. It is therefore quite possible that the *Britannia* , upon leaving the Callao, had come to explore the shores of New Zealand. This would correspond with the date of June 27, 1862, assigned in the document to the sinking of the three-masted ship.”

—Obviously, said Paganel.

—But, Glenarvan continued, nothing in these remnants of words preserved on the document can be applied to New Zealand.

"To that, I can say nothing," said the quartermaster.

"Very well, Ayrton," said Glenarvan. "You have kept your word, and I will keep mine. We will decide on which island in the Pacific Ocean you will be abandoned."

"Oh! I don't care, *my lord* ," replied Ayrton.

"Return to your cabin," said Glenarvan, "and await our decision."

The quartermaster withdrew under the guard of two sailors.

"That scoundrel could have been a man," said the major.

"Yes," replied Glenarvan. "She is a strong and intelligent person! Why must her faculties have turned towards evil!"

—But Harry Grant?

—I fear he is lost forever! Poor children, who could tell them where their father is?

"Me!" replied Paganel. "Yes! Me."

It must have been noticed that the geographer, usually so loquacious and impatient, had barely spoken during Ayrton's interrogation. He listened without uttering a word. But that last word he spoke was worth more than many others, and it immediately made Glenarvan jump.

"You!" he cried, "you, Paganel, you know where Captain Grant is!"

"Yes, as far as we can know," replied the geographer.

—And who do you know that from?

—By this eternal document.

"Ah!" said the major, in a tone of utter disbelief.

"Listen first, Mac Nabbs," said Paganel, "you can shrug it off later. I didn't speak up sooner because you wouldn't have believed me. Besides, it was pointless. But if I'm making up my mind today, it's precisely because Ayrton's opinion has come to support my own."

"So, New Zealand?" asked Glenarvan.

“Listen and judge,” replied Paganel. “It wasn’t without reason, or rather, it wasn’t without ‘a reason,’ that I made the mistake that saved us. As I was writing this letter at Glenarvan’s dictation, the word ‘Zeeland’ kept nagging at me. Here’s why. You remember we were in the wagon. Mac Nabbs had just told Lady Helena the story of the convicts; he had given her the copy of the *Australian and New Zealand Gazette* that reported the Camden Bridge disaster. Now, as I was writing, the newspaper lay on the ground, folded in such a way that only two syllables of its title were visible. Those two syllables were ‘ *aland* .’ What a revelation! *‘aland’* was precisely a word in the English document, a word we had hitherto translated as ‘on *the ground* ,’ and which must have been the ending of the proper name *Zealand* . ”

—Huh! said Glenarvan.

"Yes," Paganel continued with deep conviction, "this interpretation had escaped me, and do you know why? Because my research was naturally focused on the French document, which is more complete than the others, and where this important word is missing."

—Oh! oh! said the major, that's too much imagination, Paganel, and you're forgetting your previous deductions a little too easily.

—Come on, Major, I'm ready to answer you.

—So, Mac Nabbs continued, what becomes of your word *austra* ?

—What it was originally. It only refers to the "southern" regions.

—Good. And this syllable *indi* , which was first the root of *indiens* , and a second time the root of *indigènes* ?

—Well, the third and final time, replied Paganel, it will be the first syllable of the word *indigence* !

—And *contin* ! cried Mac Nabbs, does it still mean *continent* ?

—No! Because New Zealand is just an island.

"So?" Glenarvan asked.

“My dear lord,” replied Paganel, “I will translate the document for you according to my third interpretation, and you will judge. I have only two observations: 1) forget as much as possible the previous interpretations, and clear your mind of all prior concerns; 2) some passages will seem ‘forced’ to you, and it is possible that I may translate them incorrectly, but they are of no importance, among them the word *‘agony, ’* which offends me, but which I cannot explain otherwise.

Besides, it is the French document that serves as the basis for my interpretation, and do not forget that it was written by an Englishman, to whom the idioms of the French language may not have been familiar. This being said, I will begin."

And Paganel, slowly articulating each syllable, recited the following phrases:

"On *June 27, 1862* , the *three-masted ship Britannia* , of *Glasgow* , *sank* , after a long *agony* , in the *southern seas* off the coast of New Zealand . Two *sailors* and *Captain Grant* managed to reach it." There, continually suffering from abject poverty, they *threw this document overboard* at… 37° 11' longitude. *Come to their* aid, or they are *lost* .

Paganel stopped. His interpretation was plausible. But, precisely because it seemed as likely as the previous ones, it could also be wrong. Glenarvan and the major therefore did not attempt to discuss it.

However, since the *Britannia 's tracks* had not been found on either the coasts of Patagonia or Australia, at the point where these two countries are intersected by the thirty-seventh parallel, the odds were in favor of New Zealand. This observation, made by Paganel, particularly struck his friends.

"Now, Paganel," said Glenarvan, "will you tell me why, for about two months, you have kept this interpretation secret?"

—Because I didn't want to give you false hopes. Besides, we were going to Auckland, precisely to the point indicated by the latitude on the document.

—But since then, when we were led off that road, why didn't you speak up?

—The fact is, however correct this interpretation may be, it cannot contribute to the captain's salvation.

—For what reason, Paganel?

—Because, assuming that Captain Harry Grant was shipwrecked in New Zealand, since two years have passed without him reappearing, it means that he was a victim of the shipwreck or of the New Zealanders.

"So, what is your opinion?" Glenarvan asked.

—That perhaps some remains of the shipwreck could be found, but that the survivors of the *Britannia* are irrevocably lost!

"Silence on all this, my friends," said Glenarvan, "and let me choose the moment when I will break this sad news to Captain Grant's children!"

## Chapter XX *A Cry in the Night*

The crew soon learned that Ayrton's revelations had not clarified Captain Grant's mysterious situation. Discouragement ran deep on board, for they had relied on the quartermaster, and the quartermaster knew nothing that could put the *Duncan* on the *Britannia 's trail* !

The yacht's route was therefore maintained. All that remained was to choose the island on which Ayrton would be abandoned.

Paganel and John Mangles consulted the ship's charts. There, precisely on the thirty-seventh parallel, was an isolated islet known as Maria-Thérèse, a rock lost in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, three thousand five hundred miles from the American coast and fifteen hundred miles from New Zealand. To the north, the nearest land formed the Pomotou archipelago, under French protectorate. To the south, nothing until the eternally frozen ice pack of the Antarctic Pole. No ship ever came to investigate this solitary island. No echo of the world reached it. Only stormbirds rested there during their long voyages, and many charts didn't even mention this rock battered by the Pacific waves.

If ever absolute isolation were to be found on earth, it was on this island, cast far from human routes. Ayrton was informed of its location. Ayrton agreed to live there far from his fellow humans, and the course was set for Maria-Thérèse. At that moment, a perfectly straight line would have passed through the axis of the *Duncan* , the island, and the bay of Talcahuano.

Two days later, at two o'clock, the lookout signaled land on the horizon. It was Maria-Theresa, low, elongated, barely emerging from the waves, appearing like an enormous cetacean.

Thirty miles still separated her from the yacht, whose bow was cutting through the waves at a speed of sixteen knots per hour.

Gradually, the outline of the islet became more defined on the horizon. The sun, sinking towards the west, etched its capricious silhouette in the full light. A few low peaks stood out here and there, pricked by the rays of the sun.

At five o'clock, John Mangles thought he saw a light smoke rising towards the sky.

"Is it a volcano?" he asked Paganel, who, with his spyglass in his eyes, was observing this new land.

“I don’t know what to think,” replied the geographer. “Maria-Thérèse is a little-known point. However, it wouldn’t be surprising if its origin was due to some underwater uplift, and therefore volcanic.”

"But then," said Glenarvan, "if an eruption produced it, can we not fear that an eruption will destroy it?"

"That's unlikely," replied Paganel. "Its existence has been known for several centuries, which is a guarantee. When Julia Island emerged from the Mediterranean, it didn't remain above water for long and disappeared a few months after its birth."

"Good," said Glenarvan. "Do you think, John, that we can land before nightfall?"

“No, Your Honor. I must not risk the *Duncan* in the darkness, on a coast I don’t know. I will maintain a light pressure by tacking back and forth, and tomorrow, at daybreak, we will send a boat ashore.”

At eight o'clock in the evening, Maria-Thérèse, although five miles upwind, appeared only as an elongated shadow, barely visible. The *Duncan* was still approaching it.

At nine o'clock, a rather bright light, a fire, shone in the darkness. It was motionless and continuous.

"That would confirm the volcano," said Paganel, observing carefully.

—However, replied John Mangles, at that distance we should hear the crashing sounds that always accompany an eruption, and the east wind brings no sound to our ear.

"Indeed," said Paganel, "this volcano shines, but does not speak. Moreover, it seems to have intermittent flashes like a lighthouse."

“You’re right,” replied John Mangles, “and yet we’re not on a lit coast. Ah!” he cried, “another light! On the beach this time! Look! It’s moving! It’s changing position!”

John was not mistaken. A new fire had appeared, which sometimes seemed to go out and then suddenly rekindle.

"So the island is inhabited?" said Glenarvan.

"By savages, obviously," replied Paganel.

—But then, we cannot abandon the quartermaster there.

"No," replied the major, "that would be giving too bad a gift, even to savages."

“We’ll look for some other deserted island,” said Glenarvan, who couldn’t help but smile at Mac Nabbs’s “delicacy.” “I promised Ayrton his life, and I intend to keep my promise.”

“In any case, let us be wary,” added Paganel. “The Zeelanders have the barbaric custom of deceiving ships with moving lights, like the Cornish people of old. Now, the natives of Maria-Theresa may know this method.”

"Let it come in a quarter," John shouted to the helmsman.
"Tomorrow, at sunrise, we'll know where we stand."

At eleven o'clock, the passengers and John Mangles returned to their cabins. At the bow, the watch was strolling on the yacht's deck. At the stern, the helmsman was alone at his post.

At that moment, Mary Grant and Robert went up onto the quarterdeck.

The captain's two children, leaning on the gunwale, gazed sadly at the phosphorescent sea and the luminous wake of the *Duncan* . Mary thought about Robert's future; Robert thought about his sister's future. Both thought of their father.

Did this beloved father still exist? Did they have to give up? But
no, without him, what would life be? Without him, what would become of them?
What would have become of them already without Lord Glenarvan, without Lady
Helena?

The young boy, matured by misfortune, could guess the thoughts that troubled his sister. He took Mary's hand in his own.

“Mary,” he told her, “never despair. Remember the lessons our father taught us: ‘Courage is the best medicine here on earth,’ he used to say. Let us have it, then, that stubborn courage that made him superior to everything. Until now you have worked for me, my sister; I want to work for you in turn.”

—Dear Robert! replied the young girl.

"There's something I need to teach you," Robert continued. "You won't get angry, Mary?"

—Why should I get angry, my child?

—And you'll let me do it?

"What do you mean?" asked Mary, worried.

—My sister! I will be a sailor…

"Will you leave me?" cried the young girl, squeezing her brother's hand.

“Yes, sister! I will be a sailor like my father, a sailor like Captain John! Mary, my dear Mary! Captain John hasn’t lost all hope! You will, like me, have faith in his devotion! He will make me, he promised, a good, a great sailor, and until then, we will search for our father together! Say that you want it, sister! What our father would have done for us, our duty, mine at least, is to do for him! My life has one purpose to which it is entirely due: to search, always to search for the one who would never have abandoned either of us! Dear Mary, how good our father was!”

"And so noble, so generous!" Mary continued. "Do you know, Robert, that he was already one of the glories of our country and that he would have been counted among its great men, if fate had not stopped him in his tracks!"

"If I know!" said Robert.

Mary Grant held Robert close to her heart. The young boy felt tears streaming down his forehead.

"Mary! Mary!" he cried, "No matter what our friends say, no matter what silence they keep, I still hope and I will always hope! A man like my father does not die before he has accomplished his task!"

Mary Grant could not answer. Sobs choked her. A thousand feelings clashed in her soul at the thought that new attempts would be made to find Harry Grant, and that the young captain's devotion was boundless.

"Does Mr. John still have hope?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Robert. "He's a brother who will never abandon us. I'll be a sailor, won't I, sister, a sailor to search for my father with him! Will you?"

"If I want to!" replied Mary. "But separate us!" murmured the young girl.

"You won't be alone, Mary. I know that! My friend John told me. Mrs. Helena won't let you leave her. You're a woman; you can, you must accept her kindness. To refuse it would be ungrateful! But a man, as my father told me a hundred times, a man must make his own way!"

—But what will become of our dear home in Dundee, so full of memories?

“We’ll keep her, little sister! It’s all arranged, and very well arranged, by our friend John and also by Lord Glenarvan. He’ll keep you at Malcolm’s Castle, as his daughter! The lord told my friend John, and my friend John told me again! You’ll be at home there, finding someone to talk to about our father, until John and I bring him back to you one day! Ah! What a wonderful day that will be!” cried Robert, his brow beaming with enthusiasm.

"My brother, my child," replied Mary, "how happy our father would be if he could hear you! How you resemble him, dear Robert, that beloved father! When you are a man, you will be entirely his!"

"God hear you, Mary," said Robert, blushing with a holy and filial pride.

"But how can we repay Lord and Lady Glenarvan?" Mary Grant continued.

"Oh! It won't be difficult!" exclaimed Robert with his youthful confidence. "We love them, we venerate them, we tell them so, we kiss them warmly, and one day, at the first opportunity, we'll get ourselves killed for them!"

“Live for them, on the contrary!” cried the young girl, covering her brother’s forehead with kisses. “They’ll like it better that way—and so will I!”

Then, lost in indefinable reveries, the captain's two children gazed at each other in the vague darkness of the night. Yet, in their thoughts, they conversed, they questioned each other, they answered each other again. The calm sea rocked in long undulations, and the propeller stirred a luminous eddy in the shadows. Then a strange and truly supernatural incident occurred. The brother and sister, through one of those magnetic communications that mysteriously bind souls together, simultaneously and at the same instant experienced the same hallucination. From the midst of these alternately dark and bright waves, Mary and Robert thought they heard a voice rising toward them, its deep and lamentable sound making every fiber of their hearts tremble.

"To me! To me!" cried the voice.

"Mary," said Robert, "did you hear that? Did you hear that?"

And, suddenly rising above the rail, both of them, leaning over, questioned the depths of the night.

But they saw nothing but the shadow that stretched endlessly before them.

“Robert,” said Mary, pale with emotion, “I thought… Yes, I thought like you… We both have a fever, my Robert!…”

But a new call reached them, and this time the illusion was such that the same cry came out of both their hearts at once:

"My father! My father!..."

It was too much for Mary Grant. Overcome with emotion, she fainted in Robert's arms.

"Help!" Robert cried. "My sister! My father! Help!"

The helmsman rushed to help the young girl up. The watchmen ran over, then John Mangles, Lady Helena, and Glenarvan, suddenly awakened.

"My sister is dying, and our father is here!" cried Robert, pointing to the waves.

We couldn't understand anything he was saying.

"Yes," he repeated. "My father is here! I heard my father's voice! Mary heard it too, just like me!"

And at that moment, Mary Grant, having regained her senses, disoriented and frantic, was also crying out: "My father! My father is here!"

The unfortunate young girl, getting up and leaning over the rail, wanted to throw herself into the sea.

" *My lord* ! Madam Helena!" she repeated, clasping her hands, "I tell you that my father is here! I assure you that I heard his voice rising from the waves like a lament, like a final farewell!"

Then, spasms and convulsions seized the poor child again.
She struggled. She had to be carried to her cabin, and Lady
Helena followed to attend to her, while Robert
kept repeating:

"My father! My father is here! I'm sure of it, *my lord* !"

Those who witnessed this distressing scene eventually realized that the captain's two children had been the victims of a hallucination. But how could they correct their senses, so violently deceived?

Glenarvan tried it, however. He took Robert by the hand and said to him:

"Did you hear your father's voice, my dear child?"

—Yes, *my lord* . There, in the middle of the waves! He was shouting: To me! To me!

—And you recognized that voice?

"Yes, I recognized his voice, *my lord* ! Oh yes! I swear it! My sister heard it, she recognized it just as I did! How could we both have been mistaken? *My lord* , let's go to my father's aid! A boat! A boat!"

Glenarvan could see that he would not be able to disabuse the poor child. Nevertheless, he made one last attempt and called the helmsman.

"Hawkins," he asked him, "were you at the helm when Miss Mary was so singularly struck?"

"Yes, Your Honor," replied Hawkins.

—And you saw nothing, heard nothing?

-Nothing.

—You see, Robert.

“If it had been Hawkins’s father,” replied the young boy with indomitable energy, “Hawkins wouldn’t say he didn’t hear anything. It was my father, *my lord* ! My father! My father!…”

Robert's voice faded into a sob. Pale and mute, he too lost consciousness.

Glenarvan had Robert carried to his bed, and the child, overcome with emotion, fell into a deep sleep.

"Poor orphans!" said John Mangles, "God is testing them in a terrible way!"

"Yes," replied Glenarvan, "the excess of pain will have produced in both of them, and at the same time, a similar hallucination."

"In both of them!" Paganel murmured. "That's strange! Pure science wouldn't admit it."

Then, leaning over the sea and listening intently, Paganel, after signaling everyone to be quiet, listened. The silence was profound everywhere. Paganel called out loudly. Nothing answered him.

"That's strange!" repeated the geographer, returning to his cabin. "A close sympathy of thoughts and sorrows is not enough to explain a phenomenon!"

The next day, March 8, at five o'clock in the morning, at the crack of dawn, the passengers, Robert and Mary among them, for it had been impossible to keep them, were gathered on the deck of the *Duncan* . Each wanted to examine this land barely glimpsed the day before.

The telescopes eagerly scanned the island's main landmarks. The yacht extended along its shores for a mile. The eye could take in their every detail. Suddenly, Robert shouted. The child claimed to see two men running and gesturing, while a third waved a flag.

"The English pavilion!" cried John Mangles, who had grabbed his telescope.

"That's right!" cried Paganel, turning sharply towards
Robert.

“ *My lord* ,” said Robert, trembling with emotion, “ *my lord* , if you do not wish me to swim to the island, you will have a boat launched. Ah! *my lord* ! I beg you on my knees to be the first to set foot on land!”

No one dared speak on board. What! On this islet crossed by the thirty-seventh parallel, three men, shipwrecked, Englishmen! And everyone, reflecting on the events of the previous day, thought of that voice Robert and Mary had heard in the night!… The children were perhaps mistaken on only one point: a voice had indeed reached them, but could that voice be their father's? No, a thousand times no, alas! And everyone, thinking of the terrible disappointment that awaited them, trembled lest this new ordeal would exceed their strength! But how could they stop them? Lord Glenarvan lacked the courage.

"To the canoe!" he cried.

In a minute, the boat was launched. The captain's two children, Glenarvan, John Mangles, and Paganel, rushed in, and it quickly overflowed under the impetus of six sailors who swam furiously.

Ten fathoms from the shore, Mary let out a heart-rending cry.

"My father!"

A man stood on the shore, between two other men. His tall, strong stature, his face both gentle and bold, offered an expressive mixture of the features of Mary and Robert Grant.

This was indeed the man the two children had so often described. Their hearts had not deceived them. This was their father, this was Captain Grant!

The captain heard Mary's cry, opened his arms, and fell to the sand, as if struck by lightning.

## Chapter XXI *Tabor Island*

No one died of joy, for the father and children returned to life even before they were brought aboard the yacht. How can one describe this scene? Words would not suffice. The entire crew wept as they watched these three beings locked in a silent embrace. Harry Grant, having reached the deck, bent his knee. The devout Scotsman wished, upon touching what was for him the soil of his homeland, to thank God, above all, for his deliverance.

Then, turning to Lady Helena, Lord Glenarvan, and his companions, he thanked them in a voice broken with emotion. In a few words, his children, during the short crossing from the islet to the yacht, had just told him the whole story of the *Duncan* .

What an immense debt he had incurred towards this noble woman and her companions! From Lord Glenarvan to the last of the sailors, had they not all fought and suffered for him?

Harry Grant expressed the feelings of gratitude that flooded his heart with such simplicity and nobility; his manly face was illuminated by such pure and gentle emotion that the entire crew felt rewarded and transcended by their ordeals. Even the impassive major had a tear in his eye that he couldn't hold back. As for the worthy Paganel, he wept like a child who doesn't bother to hide his tears.

Harry Grant never tired of looking at his daughter. He found her beautiful, charming! He told her so again and again, out loud, calling on Lady Helena as a witness, as if to certify that his paternal love was not deceiving him.

Then, turning to his son:

"How he's grown! He's a man!" he exclaimed with delight.

And he lavished on these two dear ones the thousand kisses he had amassed in his heart during two years of absence.

Robert introduced each of his friends to her in turn, finding a way to vary his expressions, even though he had the same thing to say about everyone! The reason was that everyone had been perfect for the two orphans. When it was John Mangles' turn to be introduced, the captain blushed like a young girl and his voice trembled as he answered Mary's father.

Lady Helena then told Captain Grant the story of the voyage, and she made him proud of his son, proud of his daughter.

Harry Grant learned of the young hero's exploits, and how this child had already repaid Lord Glenarvan part of his father's debt. Then, in turn, John Mangles spoke of Mary in such terms that Harry Grant, instructed by a few words from Lady Helena, placed his daughter's hand in the valiant hand of the young captain, and, turning to Lord and Lady Glenarvan:

" *My lord* , and you, madam," he said, "let us bless our children!"

When everything had been said and repeated a thousand times, Glenarvan briefed Harry Grant on the matter concerning Ayrton. Grant confirmed the quartermaster's confession regarding his landing on the Australian coast.

"He is an intelligent, bold man," he added, "whom passions have driven to evil. May reflection and repentance bring him back to better sentiments!"

But before Ayrton was transferred to Tabor Island, Harry Grant wanted to show his new friends around his home. He invited them to visit his wooden house and sit at the table of the Robinson Crusoe of Oceania. Glenarvan and his guests readily accepted. Robert and Mary Grant longed to see this solitary place where the captain had mourned them so deeply.

A boat was armed, and the father, the two children, Lord and Lady Glenarvan, the Major, John Mangles and Paganel, soon landed on the shores of the island.

A few hours were enough to explore Harry Grant's domain. It was, in truth, the summit of an underwater mountain, a plateau where basalt rocks abounded alongside volcanic debris. In the Earth's geological epochs, this mountain had gradually emerged from the depths of the Pacific under the action of subterranean fires; but, for centuries, the volcano had become a peaceful mountain, and its filled crater, an islet rising from the liquid plain. Then humus formed; the plant kingdom took hold of this new land; a few passing whalers landed domestic animals, goats and pigs, which multiplied in the wild, and nature manifested itself through its three kingdoms on this island lost in the middle of the ocean.

When the survivors of the *Britannia* took refuge there, human intervention began to regulate nature's efforts. In two and a half years, Harry Grant and his sailors transformed their islet.

Several acres of carefully cultivated land produced vegetables of excellent quality.

The visitors arrived at the house shaded by verdant gum trees; before its windows stretched the magnificent sea, sparkling in the sunlight. Harry Grant had his table set in the shade of the beautiful trees, and everyone took their seats. A leg of kid, *nardus bread* , a few bowls of milk, two or three plants of wild chicory, and pure, fresh water formed the elements of this simple meal, worthy of Arcadian shepherds.

Paganel was delighted.

His old Robinson Crusoe-like ideas were coming back to him.

"He won't be pitied, that rascal Ayrton!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "This islet is paradise."

"Yes," replied Harry Grant, "a paradise for three poor shipwrecked souls whom heaven keeps there! But I regret that Maria-Theresa was not a vast and fertile island, with a river instead of a stream and a port instead of a cove battered by the waves of the open sea."

"And why is that, Captain?" asked Glenarvan.

—Because I would have laid the foundations there for the colony I want to establish for Scotland in the Pacific.

"Ah! Captain Grant," said Glenarvan, "so you have not abandoned the idea that made you so popular in our old country?"

“No, *my lord* , and God saved me through your hands only so that I could accomplish this. Our poor brothers in old Caledonia, all those who suffer, must have refuge from misery in a new land! Our dear homeland must possess in these seas a colony of its own, and its own

alone, where it can find some of that independence and well-being it lacks in Europe!”

“Ah! That’s well said, Captain Grant,” replied Lady Helena. “
It’s a fine project, and worthy of a noble heart. But this islet?…”

—No, madam, it is a rock good at most for feeding a few settlers, whereas we need a vast land rich in all the treasures of the earliest ages.

"Well, Captain," cried Glenarvan, "the future is ours, and we will seek this land together!"

Harry Grant and Glenarvan clasped their hands in a warm embrace, as if to ratify this promise.

Then, on that very island, in that humble house, everyone wanted to know the story of the *Britannia 's survivors* during those two long years of abandonment. Harry Grant hastened to satisfy his new friends' desire:

"My story," he said, "is that of all the Robinsons cast upon an island, who, being able to rely only on God and themselves, feel that they have a duty to fight for their lives against the elements!"

"It was during the night of June 26-27, 1862, that the *Britannia* , crippled by six days of storm, was wrecked on the rocks of Maria Theresa. The sea was raging, rescue impossible, and my entire unfortunate crew perished. Only my two sailors, Bob Learce, Joe Bell, and I managed to reach the shore after twenty unsuccessful attempts!"

"The land that sheltered us was but a deserted islet, two miles wide and five miles long, with about thirty trees inland, a few meadows, and a spring of fresh water that, fortunately, never ran dry. Alone with my two sailors in this corner of the world, I did not despair. I placed my trust in God and prepared to fight resolutely. Bob and Joe, my brave companions in misfortune, my friends, energetically supported me."

“We began, like Daniel Defoe’s ideal Robinson Crusoe, our model, by gathering the ship’s wreckage, tools, a little gunpowder, weapons, and a bag of precious seeds. The first few days were difficult, but soon hunting and fishing provided us with a reliable food supply, for wild goats teemed inland on the island, and marine animals abounded on its shores. Little by little, our existence became more regular.”

“I knew the exact location of the islet thanks to my instruments, which I had salvaged from the shipwreck. This position placed us out of the shipping lanes, and we could not be rescued, except by some providential stroke of luck. While thinking of those dear to me whom I no longer hoped to see again, I bravely accepted this ordeal, and the names of my two children were mingled with my prayers every day.”

*Britannia* seeds ; potatoes, chicory, and sorrel enriched our usual diet; then other vegetables followed. We took in some kids, which were easily tamed. We had milk and butter. The *nard* , which grew in the dried-up creeks, provided us with a fairly substantial kind of bread, and material life no longer inspired any fear in us.”

“We had built a house of planks with the wreckage of the *Britannia* ; it was covered with carefully tarred sails, and under this solid shelter the

rainy season passed happily. There, many plans were discussed, many dreams, the best of which has now come true!”

“I had initially considered braving the sea in a canoe made from the ship's wreckage, but fifteen hundred miles separated us from the nearest land, namely the islands of the Pomotou archipelago. No vessel could have withstood such a long crossing. So I abandoned the idea, and I now awaited my salvation only from divine intervention.”

“Ah! My poor children! How many times, from the top of the coastal rocks, we watched for ships offshore! During the whole time of our exile, only two or three sails appeared on the horizon, only to disappear immediately! Two and a half years passed in this way. We no longer hoped, but we did not yet despair.”

“Finally, the day before, I had climbed to the highest peak on the island, when I saw a light smoke in the west. It grew. Soon a ship became visible to my eyes. It seemed to be heading towards us.”

"But wouldn't he avoid this islet which offered him no respite?"

"Ah! What a day of anguish, and how my heart did not break in my breast! My companions lit a fire on one of the peaks of Maria-Theresa. Night fell, but the yacht gave no signal of recognition! Salvation was there, however! Were we to see it vanish!"

"I hesitated no longer. The shadow was lengthening. The ship could round the island during the night. I threw myself into the sea and headed towards it. Hope tripled my strength. I cut through the waves with superhuman vigor. I approached the yacht, and was barely thirty fathoms away, when it changed course!"

"Then I uttered those desperate cries which only my two children heard, and which were not an illusion.

“Then I returned to shore, exhausted, overcome by emotion and fatigue. My two sailors found me half-dead. It was a horrible night, that last night we spent on the island, and we thought we were abandoned forever, when, at daybreak, I saw the yacht tacking back and forth under light steam. Your boat was launched… We were saved, and, by heaven’s grace! My children, my dear children, were there, reaching out their arms to me!”

Harry Grant's tale ended amidst kisses and caresses from Mary and Robert. And it was only then that the captain learned he owed his life to that rather hieroglyphic document, which, eight days after his shipwreck, he had sealed in a bottle and entrusted to the whims of the waves. But what was Jacques Paganel thinking during Captain Grant's story? The worthy geographer turned the words of the document over and over in his mind a thousand times! He went over those three successive interpretations, all three false! How was this Maria-Theresa Island indicated on those papers eaten away by the sea? Paganel could bear it no longer, and, seizing Harry Grant's hand:

"Captain," he cried, "will you finally tell me what your indecipherable document contained?"

At this request from the geographer, curiosity was widespread, because the answer to the riddle, sought for nine months, was about to be revealed!

"Well, Captain," asked Paganel, "do you remember the exact terms of the document?"

"Exactly," replied Harry Grant, "and not a day has passed without my memory recalling those words to which our only hope was attached."

"And what are they, Captain?" asked Glenarvan. "Speak, for our pride is wounded."

“I am ready to grant your request,” replied Harry Grant, “but you know that, to increase the chances of salvation, I had placed three documents written in three languages inside the bottle. Which one do you wish to see?”

"So they are not identical?" exclaimed Paganel.

—Yes, except for one name.

—Well, cite the French document, Glenarvan continued; it is the one that the waves have respected the most, and it has mainly served as the basis for our interpretations.

" *My lord* , here it is word for word," replied Harry Grant.

“On June 27, 1862, the three-masted ship *Britannia* , from Glasgow, was lost fifteen hundred leagues off the coast of Patagonia, in the southern hemisphere. Brought ashore, two sailors and Captain Grant reached Tabor Island…”

—Huh! said Paganel.

“There,” continued Harry Grant, “constantly plagued by cruel poverty, they have discarded this document at 15°3' longitude and 37°11' latitude. Come to their aid, or they are lost.”

At the mention of Tabor's name, Paganel had suddenly risen; then, unable to contain himself any longer, he cried out:

"What, Tabor Island! But that's Maria-Theresa Island?"

"No doubt, Mr. Paganel," replied Harry Grant, "Maria-Theresa on English and German maps, but Tabor on French maps!"

At that moment, a tremendous punch landed on Paganel's shoulder, buckling under the impact. Truth be told, it was delivered by the major, who for the first time broke with his strict sense of decorum.

"Geographer!" said Mac Nabbs in a tone of utter contempt.

But Paganel hadn't even felt the major's hand. What was that compared to the geographical blow that overwhelmed him!

So, as he told Captain Grant, he had gradually drawn closer to the truth! He had almost entirely deciphered the indecipherable document! The names of Patagonia, Australia, and New Zealand had appeared to him in turn with irrefutable certainty. *Cotin* , initially meaning *continent* , had gradually regained its true meaning of *continual* . *Indi* had successively meant *Indians, natives* , and finally *indigence* , its true meaning. Only the corrupted word "abor" had deceived the geographer's sagacity! Paganel had stubbornly made it the root of the verb " *aborder"* (to approach), when it was the proper noun, the French name for Tabor Island, the island that served as a refuge for the survivors of the *Britannia ! An error difficult to avoid, however, since the Duncan* 's world maps gave this islet the name Maria-Thérèse.

"It doesn't matter!" cried Paganel, tearing his hair out, "I shouldn't have forgotten that double appellation! It's an unforgivable mistake, an

error unworthy of a secretary of the geographical society! I am dishonored!"

"But, Mr. Paganel," said Lady Helena, "moderate your grief!"

—No! Madam, no! I am but a donkey!

"And not even a learned donkey!" replied the major, by way of consolation.

When the meal was over, Harry Grant put everything back in order in his house. He took nothing with him, wanting the guilty party to inherit the honest man's wealth.

They returned on board. Glenarvan planned to leave that very day and gave his orders for the quartermaster to disembark. Ayrton was taken to the quarterdeck and found himself in the presence of Harry Grant.

"It's me, Ayrton," said Grant.

"It's you, Captain," replied Ayrton, showing no surprise at seeing Harry Grant again. "Well, I'm not sorry to see you in good health."

—It seems, Ayrton, that I made a mistake by landing you on inhabited land.

—It seems so, Captain.

—You will replace me on this deserted island. May heaven inspire you to repent!

"So be it!" replied Ayrton calmly.

Then Glenarvan, addressing the quartermaster, said to him:

"Ayrton, do you still maintain this resolution to be abandoned?"

—Yes, *my lord* .

—Does Tabor Island suit you?

-Perfectly.

“Now, listen to my last words, Ayrton. Here, you will be far from any land, and without any possible communication with your fellow men. Miracles are rare, and you will not be able to flee this islet where the *Duncan* leaves you. You will be alone, under the watchful eye of a God who reads the depths of hearts, but you will be neither lost nor forgotten, as Captain Grant was. Unworthy as you may be of men’s remembrance, men will remember you. I know where you are, Ayrton, I know where to find you, and I will never forget it.”

"God preserve your honor!" Ayrton replied simply.

These were the last words exchanged between Glenarvan and the quartermaster. The boat was ready. Ayrton climbed aboard.

John Mangles had in advance had some crates of preserved food, tools, weapons and a supply of powder and lead transported to the island.

The quartermaster could therefore regenerate himself through work; he lacked nothing, not even books, and among others the Bible, so dear to English hearts.

The time for parting had come. The crew and passengers stood on the deck. More than one felt a pang of sadness. Mary Grant and Lady Helena could not contain their emotions.

"So it has to be done?" the young woman asked her husband, "so this poor fellow has to be abandoned!"

"It must be, Helena," replied Lord Glenarvan. "It is expiation!"

At that moment, the boat, commanded by John Mangles, overflowed its banks. Ayrton, standing still impassive, took off his hat and saluted gravely.

Glenarvan uncovered himself, along with the entire crew, as one does before a man who is about to die, and the boat sailed away in the midst of a profound silence.

Ayrton, having reached land, jumped onto the sand, and the canoe returned to the boat.

It was then four o'clock in the evening, and from the top of the poop deck, the passengers could see the quartermaster, arms crossed, motionless like a statue on a rock, and looking at the ship.

"We are leaving, *my lord* ?" asked John Mangles.

"Yes, John," replied Glenarvan briskly, more moved than he wanted to appear.

"Go head!" John shouted to the engineer.

The steam hissed through its conduits, the propeller beat the waves, and, at eight o'clock, the last peaks of Tabor Island disappeared into the

shadows of the night.

## Chapter XXII *Jacques Paganel's Last Distraction*

The *Duncan* , eleven days after leaving the island on March 18, sighted the American coast, and the next day anchored in Talcahuano Bay.

He was returning after a five-month voyage, during which, strictly following the 37th parallel, he had circumnavigated the globe. The passengers of this memorable expedition, unprecedented in the annals of the *Travellers' Club* , had just crossed Chile, the Pampas, Argentina, the Atlantic Ocean, the Acuña Islands, the Indian Ocean, the Amsterdam Islands, Australia, New Zealand, Tabor Island, and the Pacific Ocean. Their efforts had not been in vain, and they were bringing home the survivors of the *Britannia shipwreck* .

Not one of these brave Scotsmen, who had set out at the call of their laird, was missing; all were returning to their old Scotland, and this expedition recalled the "without tears" battle of ancient history.

The *Duncan* , having completed its refueling, extended along the coasts of
Patagonia, rounded Cape Horn, and raced across the
Atlantic Ocean.

No voyage was less eventful. The yacht carried within its hull a cargo of happiness.

There were no more secrets on board, not even
John Mangles' feelings for Mary Grant.

Yes, however. One mystery still puzzled Mac Nabbs. Why did Paganel always remain hermetically sealed in his clothes and cravatted deep inside a scarf that reached up to his ears?

The major was dying to know the reason for this peculiar habit. But it's fair to say that, despite Mac Nabbs' questions, allusions, and suspicions, Paganel didn't budge.

No, not even when the *Duncan* crossed the line and the seams of the deck melted in fifty-degree heat.

"He is so distracted, he thinks he is in Saint Petersburg," said the major, seeing the geographer wrapped in a vast cloak, as if the mercury had been frozen in the thermometer.

Finally, on May 9, fifty-three days after leaving Talcahuano, John Mangles raised the lights off Cape Clear. The yacht entered the St. George's Channel, crossed the Irish Sea, and, on May 10, reached the Gulf of Clyde. At eleven o'clock, it anchored at Dumbarton. At two o'clock in the afternoon, its passengers entered Malcolm Castle, amidst the cheers of the Highlanders.

It was therefore written that Harry Grant and his two companions would be saved, that John Mangles would marry Mary Grant in the old cathedral of St. Mungo, where the Reverend Morton, after having prayed, nine months earlier, for the salvation of the father, blessed the marriage of his daughter and her savior!

It was therefore written that Robert would be a sailor like Harry Grant, a sailor like John Mangles, and that he would take up with them

the great projects of the captain, under the high protection of Lord Glenarvan!

But was it written that Jacques Paganel would not die a boy?
Probably.

Indeed, the learned geographer, after his heroic exploits, could not escape fame. His antics caused a sensation in Scottish high society. He was in high demand, and he could no longer keep up with the attentions he received.

And it was then that a charming young lady of thirty, none other than Major Mac Nabbs' cousin, a little eccentric herself, but still kind and charming, became enamored with the geographer's peculiarities and offered him her hand in marriage. There was a million in it; but this was kept secret.

Paganel was far from insensitive to Miss
Arabella's feelings; however, he did not dare to express himself.

It was the major who came between these two hearts made for each other. He even told Paganel that marriage was the "last distraction" he could afford.

Paganel was greatly embarrassed, for, in a strange peculiarity, he could not bring himself to utter the fatal word.

"Don't you like Miss Arabella?" Mac Nabbs kept asking her.

—Oh! Major, she is charming! cried Paganel, a thousand times too charming, and, if I must tell you the truth, I would like it more if she were less so! I would wish her a fault.

"Don't worry," replied the major, "she has them, and more than one. Even the most perfect woman always has her share. So, Paganel, is it decided?"

"I dare not," Paganel continued.

—Now then, my learned friend, why do you hesitate?

"I am unworthy of Miss Arabella!" the geographer would invariably reply.

And he wouldn't leave.

Finally, one day cornered by the intractable major, he ended up confiding in him, under the seal of secrecy, a detail that would facilitate his identification, should the police ever come after him.

"Bah!" exclaimed the major.

"That's as I tell you," replied Paganel.

—What does it matter? My worthy friend.

—You think so?

“On the contrary, it only makes you more unique. It adds to your personal merits! It makes you the unparalleled man Arabella dreamed of!”

And the major, maintaining an imperturbable seriousness, left Paganel prey to the most poignant anxieties.

A short conversation took place between Mac Nabbs and Miss Arabella.

Two weeks later, a wedding was celebrated with great fanfare in the chapel of Malcolm-Castle.

Paganel was magnificent, but tightly buttoned up, and Miss Arabella was splendid.

And this geographer's secret would have remained buried in the depths of the unknown, if the major had not spoken of it to Glenarvan, who did not hide it from Lady Helena, who said a word about it to *Mistress* Mangles.

In short, this secret reached the ears of *Mistress* Olbinett, and it exploded.

Jacques Paganel, during his three days of captivity among the Maori, had been *tattooed* , but tattooed from his feet to his shoulders, and he bore on his chest the image of a heraldic kiwi, with outstretched wings, which was biting his heart.

This was the only adventure of his grand voyage from which Paganel never recovered and which he never forgave New Zealand; it was also what, despite many entreaties and his regrets, prevented him from returning to France. He feared exposing the entire geographical society, through his person, to the jokes of caricaturists and tabloids by bringing back a newly tattooed secretary.

The captain's return to Scotland was hailed as a national event and Harry Grant became the most popular man in Old Caledonia.

His son Robert became a sailor like him, a sailor like Captain John, and it was under the auspices of Lord Glenarvan that he revived the project of founding a Scottish colony in the Pacific seas.

End of Project Gutenberg's The Children of Captain Grant, by Jules Verne

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CHILDREN OF CAPTAIN GRANT ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by US copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You can use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by US copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

# THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG™ LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

## Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg electronic works

even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project

Gutenberg work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org . If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is derived from texts not protected by US copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain

permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is posted with permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg License for all works posted with permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg License.

1.E.6. You can convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form.

Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by US copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the

Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may request a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT

NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

## Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

## Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by US federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 41 Watchung Plaza #516, Montclair NJ 07042, USA, +1 (862) 621-9288. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

## Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate .

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. US laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate.

## Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the US unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org .

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.